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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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JANUARY 18, 1999

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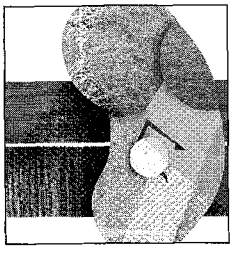

Cover by Jonathan Houston for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Illustration by David Cowles. Articles on pages 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, and 18.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Best interests

To the editors:
As the high earner in a custody battle that took place years ago, I am not a neutral, objective reader of Jonathan Cohn's "A Man's Place" (December 7, 1998). But, since no one can escape knowing how devastating divorces and custody battles are to children, it is difficult for me to see a man whose philandering ended a marriage as someone who exhibits more caring behavior toward his children than the wife who stayed faithful. These battles leave lifelong scars, even if one wins, as I did. But the entire family constellation needs to be considered, not just the number of hours punched in by each parent.

KATHERINE ELLIS
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To the editors:
Here in Vermont, courts are not allowed to discriminate against either parent on the basis of sex when assigning child custody. Nevertheless, in the vast majority of divorces in this state, children end up with their mothers. The reasoning is the same as that by which Alice Hector has lost her kids, the doctrine that custody should go to the "primary caregiver." Such logic will continue to negatively affect more and more working women who succeed in the traditionally male-dominated economy.

Perhaps we need to dig deeper to reexamine the assumption that, because parents divorce one another, one of the parents must therefore divorce the children. How is it that a man (and increasingly a woman) can lose his or her kids, and the kids lose a parent, for no reason other than the will of an estranged spouse? Why not have equal voices in determining children's best interests? Joint custody has problems, to be sure, but so does the routine denigration of parents by denying them custody for the convenience of the other parent.

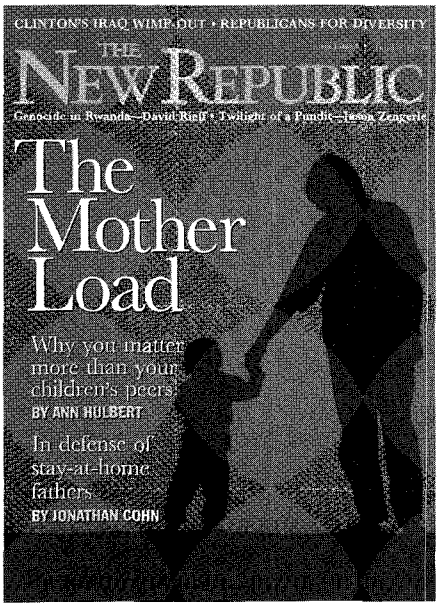
RICHARD MCCORMACK
Majority Leader, Vermont Senate
Montpelier, Vermont

To the editors:
One salient point apparently missed by the courts (and by Jonathan Cohn): Which parent is responsible for spending the $300,000 annual household salary down to the point of "negative cash flow," requiring a second job to make ends meet? Determining whose fiduciary irresponsibility has led the household to this state of affairs ought to be a priority for the court, with the answer added to the custody decision mix.

ROBERT D. SEIP
Montgomery, Alabama

True stories

To the editors:
On December 7, 1998, THE NEW REPUBLIC published "Turley's Gig," by Jason Zengerle, on my commentary during the Clinton crisis. While I had previously refused to be interviewed by THE NEW REPUBLIC, I decided to do the interview after I learned that Steve Brill had launched a "profile piece" for his publication, *Brill's Content.* I have been a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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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The Mother Load
Why you matter more than your children's peers
BY ANN HULBERT
In defense of stay-at-home fathers
BY JONATHAN COHN

vocal critic of Brill for biased reporting in the White House crisis as well as false statements when confronted about such practices.

It was not my work as a commentator but my reputation as an academic that led me to agree to the interview with THE NEW REPUBLIC. My concern was that Brill's staff had suggested in interviews with colleagues and acquaintances of mine around the country that I did not have a background in constitutional or criminal law. I have taught, litigated, and testified in these areas for more than ten years, and I have three law review articles specifically on impeachment. I gave this information to THE NEW REPUBLIC.

When I agreed to the interview with THE NEW REPUBLIC late in October, *Brill's Content* had already conducted extensive interviews around the country. More than a dozen friends and colleagues called to tell me that they were contacted by Brill's staff for a "profile piece" that appeared quite hostile. When I was contacted, Brill's staff informed me that Brill personally ordered the "profile piece."

THE NEW REPUBLIC interviewed Brill many weeks after the first interviews began on the profile piece and after correspondence with Brill on the motivations for such a piece. When confronted, Brill characteristically denied any such piece was in development. Brill stated that the magazine had simply been working on "a piece for its February issue that will list fifteen or twenty Lewinsky scandal pundits." Since he claimed that there was never any profile piece in development, Brill coupled his denial with a personal attack that I was suffering from "delusions of grandeur."

THE NEW REPUBLIC called me shortly before the publication about Brill's categorical denial. My response to THE NEW REPUBLIC was that the denial was "quintessentially Steve Brill" and that THE NEW REPUBLIC would be foolish to believe such nonsense. (In the past, Brill has denied facts in interviews until forced to admit the truth when confronted with such proof as tape recordings.)

The day after the piece in THE NEW REPUBLIC ran with Brill's denial of any profile piece, I received a call from *Brill's Content* to confirm facts for the "profile piece." When I noted that Brill had denied the existence of any such profile piece, the reporter stated that the profile piece had been set for publication by order of Steve Brill more than three months prior and that it was still set for publication. I have been told that the profile piece will appear in the next issue of *Brill's Content.*

JONATHAN TURLEY
Washington, D.C.

Jason Zengerle replies:
I reported both Steve Brill's and Jonathan Turley's comments accurately and in context. After receiving Professor Turley's letter, I called *Brill's Content* to check again about the status of the "profile piece." I was told that the aforementioned piece is slated to run in the February issue of *Brill's Content* as a 620-word item in the magazine's notebook section. I suppose Professor Turley and I won't know the real truth until we see an actual copy of next month's *Brill's Content.*

Market madness

To the editors:
Readers of TNR should know that the sweet tale told by Peter Beinart about

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the opening of a supermarket subsidized by at least $4 million of government money with the advice of Yale faculty and student "experts" had a very unfortunate consequence for thousands of downtown residents ("A Super Market," December 7, 1998). The only supermarket in the downtown area, open for nearly 30 years and paying taxes and rent to a commercial landlord, closed within weeks of the opening of the new subsidized market, forcing the poor and elderly customers of the old market to drive (if they own cars) or take a bus to the new market to get their groceries.

Rather than a model of participatory urban development, the New Haven supermarket story is just another example of a well-meaning intervention that has had harmful unintended consequences.

MORTON J. TENZER
New Haven, Connecticut

Quota's merit

To the editors:

Charles Lane asserts in the December 7, 1998, TRB column that the problem with affirmative action is that it "supersedes objective criteria of merit" in hiring or admissions ("Quota Kings"). But factors other than "objective criteria of merit" have always played a significant role in hiring or admissions. Having a good pedigree, or a close relative as an alumnus, has long been an advantage in gaining admission to an elite educational institution. Having a personal connection with someone at the company (particularly with someone in management) has always been an advantage in getting hired or promoted. The "old boys' network" and the "buddy system" are not myths created by minorities and women. They exist and thrive, even in today's "meritocracy."

DAVID HAWKINS
Baltimore, Maryland

Secondary education

To the editors:

John N. Hickman has it exactly right in his article "Adjunct U." (December 7, 1998). But he doesn't explain how badly the students are treated. They get faculty members who are given a different syllabus and course materials for the same course they taught the previous semester. This means that most previous class experience goes for naught. And the universities try to pack as many students as they can into each course. The result is desperate under-instruction.

CHARLES KELBER
Rockville, Maryland

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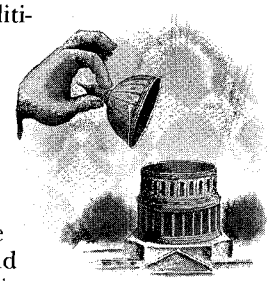
FROM WASHINGTON

Scandalania

We are all Clintonian now, whatever happens in the Senate. There is the slick Republican House majority, for example. It adopted the article of impeachment alleging that Clinton perjured himself before the grand jury in repeating his deposition in the Paula Jones civil case, yet it voted down the article alleging perjury in the deposition—even though the latter charge is the *primum mobile* behind the entire criminal investigation. The Republican congressmen were making a show of observing the distinction between private and public even as they were hurrying the process of corroding it. (They dropped the tort and kept the tart.) Then there are those protean moderate Republicans. Five of them, having voted for impeachment in the House, are now pressing for censure in the Senate. They are trying to have sex without touching. There are the media pundits who, in prestigious media forums, accuse the media of remoteness from the public while at the same time accusing the media of intimately manipulating the public. They are trying to touch without having sex. And finally there are the feminists, who made the personal political, and Larry Flynt, who earns his living making the private public. Both parties have discovered that they have been touching and coupling all along.



My favorite Clintonists are the actors Robert De Niro, Jack Nicholson, and Alec Baldwin. In *Taxi Driver*, *Guilty by Suspicion*, and *Wag the Dog*, De Niro starred in films that boldly plumb Hollywood's profoundest theme: politicians are gangsters, and government is the mob. In *Chinatown*, starring Nicholson, public officials are gangsters and government the mob. In *Mercury Rising*, Baldwin plays, yes, an Army colonel who runs his small government agency as if he were a gangster and his agency the mob. And yet here are the actors, drawing their moral authority from the political caricatures they consistently choose to bring to life, mewling grandiloquently about how Congress is not reflecting the will of the people. One gloomy cheer for the right-wing Republicans, who so slavishly reflected the will of the people (their district constituents—it's called democracy), but who refused to accept the strange phantasmal will of Tinseltown.

Is it any surprise that a scandal swirling around a president so comfortably at odds with himself has provoked a similar response? Here is my own self-contradictory reaction: Though the commotion attending on The Mouth that Lured While The People Snored repels me, I also think that the scandal and its coverage have made for one of the most interesting, illuminating, and even beneficial public experiences this country has lived through.

Americans love the artificially apocalyptic tone. We love to imagine the country as absolutely broken so that thought has nothing to do but eagerly turn to ideas of repair. And so we now hear laments about our national tragedy, our decaying institutions, our vanishing democracy, our corrupted media, the death of feminism, the extinction of the private realm, the pollution of the public realm, etc. All of this in less than one year, during which nothing in society or politics or culture seems concretely to have changed at all?

No. What the Starr-Clinton clash really proved was that this country can endure a political scandal without suffering a political crisis. Scrutinizing dramatically coagulating circumstances is how America, a land without too many traditional guides, historical precedents, or prescribed patterns of conduct, makes sense of its own fluidity. Out of the present confusion—the present is always confusing—a palimpsestic event is born amid pap and patter.

Of course some of the media went too far. Of course the triviality of the coverage was sickening. Of course inanity had a field day. And yet the media that drew attention to themselves by sensationally inflating the scandal now draw attention to themselves by sensationally deflating their coverage of the scandal. Don't worry, there is always something to worry about.

All this examination of how the scandal was examined produces a danger-

continued on page 45

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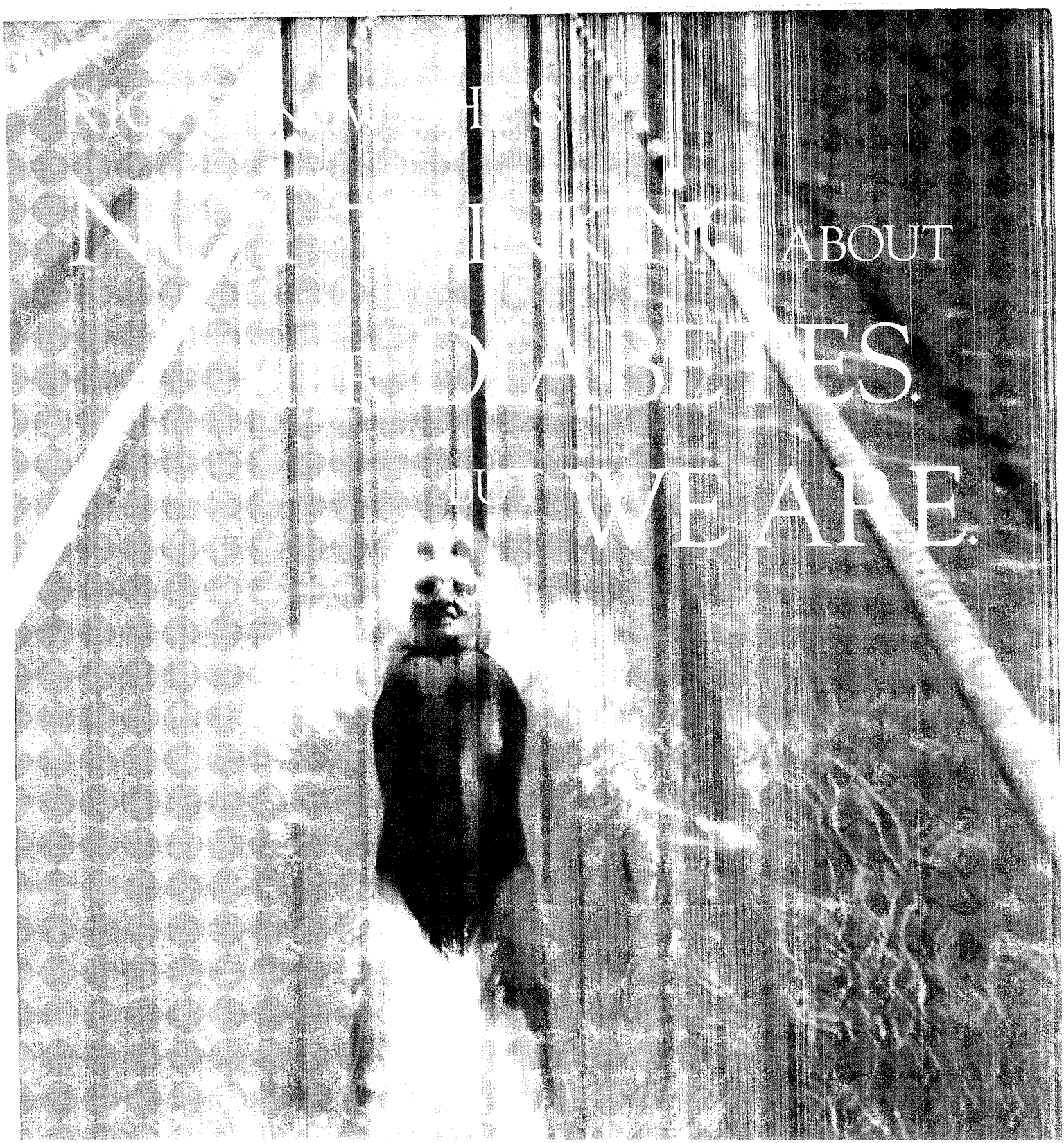

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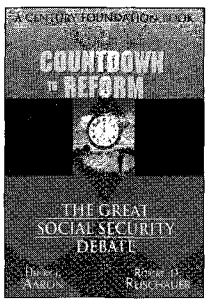

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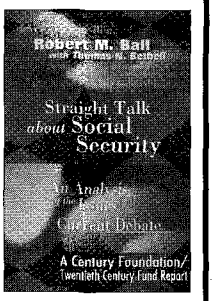

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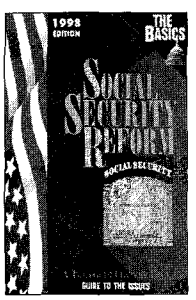

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 18, 1999

INGRATES

When the United States and Britain bombed Iraq, the harshest condemnation came from two pro-Iraq Security Council members with whom the Clinton administration has worked overtime to improve relations: Russia and China. Boris Yeltsin left his sickbed to express "the most serious concern, a feeling of dismay and deep alarm." Russia's ambassador to the United Nations huffed about "gross violations of the rule of law." China's U.N. ambassador said the U.S. had "violated the U.N. charter and the norms governing international law." Isn't there something a little odd about the Clinton administration's equanimity toward such abuse from countries it has so solicitously befriended?

Consider what the U.S. has done to help bail out the Russian economy. In July, at the administration's behest, the International Monetary Fund promised Russia $22.6 billion to stave off financial collapse. The Russian economy collapsed anyway, and the IMF suspended disbursements once a $4.8 billion installment disappeared. But the Russians are dickering for more, which would merely add to the $14.3 billion the IMF has loaned Russia since 1992 (a figure that does not count the aforementioned $4.8 billion). This summer, the World Bank loaned Russia $1.5 billion, the largest loan it has ever made in Europe or Central Asia. New World Bank loans during the next year and a half may reach $6 billion—over and above the $11.4 billion Russia received in its first six years as a Bank member. Needless to say, both the IMF and the World Bank are largely underwritten by American taxpayers. And don't forget: The IMF-World Bank largesse came on top of U.S. bilateral aid, totaling $4.9 billion between 1992 and 1997, plus more than $1 billion worth of financing and investment insurance from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

Congressional support for such assistance has waned recently, but the fiscal 1999 budget still calls for $200 million in new aid. The Clinton administration keeps thinking up new reasons, some wiser than others, to send money to Russia. One sensible idea, the $30 million nuclear cities initiative, seeks to employ Russian scientists so they won't sell out to the likes of Iraq. The Department of Agriculture has announced $625 million in food aid. But what justifies the administration's planned $660 million bailout of Russia's space program? Is manned space flight really a priority in a near-starving country?

Russia has also been soaking up money from U.S. allies. The Germans have shelled out $29.6 billion in government credits and loan guarantees; Germany's private banks, at their government's urging, loaned Russia some $30.5 billion. South Korea issued $2 billion of guaranteed loans during the 1991–92 period, and Japan provided about $6 billion worth of aid and loans from 1991 to 1998. As part of last summer's bailout agreement, Japan joined with the World Bank and IMF to promise another $1.5 billion to Russia.

A TNR survey of outside support for Russia, conducted by reporter-researcher Garance Franke-Ruta, reached the tentative but still-disturbing conclusion that, all told, Russia has sucked in $150 billion from Western sources, public and private—and that no one can really say where this fantastic sum has gone. Obviously, not much went to create productive enterprise. Just as obviously, plenty of it wound up in offshore accounts. Moody's Investor Services says Russian investors contributed $43.9 billion to capital flight during the three-year period of 1995–97. Russia's Central Bank reports that Russians stashed $2.5 billion abroad in September 1998 alone.

Gaining an edge for U.S. business is also the rationale for the soft U.S. line on China. True, China is not about to default on its debts. But it faces enormous internal problems that spell trouble for the Communist Party's attempt to carry out "Market-Leninism." Special economic zones on the southern coast are faltering. Add ethnic tensions, environmental destruction, and unemployment, and you have the makings of internal unrest.

Beijing's response to these trends has been a vicious crackdown on dissent. Dissident leader Xu Wenli has just been sentenced to 13 years for subversion. Two formerly New York-based dissidents, Zhang Lin and Wei Quanbo, having sneaked back into their home country to test the limits of its political space, face three years in a labor camp. These punishments are a sign of the regime's weakness, not its strength; they show how greatly Beijing fears any challenge to its legitimacy in the current climate of economic uncertainty.

Neither Russia nor China has the military might to challenge the United States directly. But both can play the role of spoiler—and they do. As Russia and China work to gut inspections, lift sanctions, and aid Saddam in every way possible, they are deliberately snubbing the same U.S. government that has bent over backward to accommodate them. Russia and China have decided that some of their interests are inimical to ours. How much longer will it take the Clinton administration to recognize the implications for America's national interests? •

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NOTEBOOK

LAME APOLOGY: Khieu Samphan, a top leader of the Khmer Rouge regime that murdered more than one million Cambodians from 1975 to 1979, says he's "sorry, very sorry" for the suffering of his countrymen. But when he muttered those words at a press conference marking his return to Cambodian society—under a blanket immunity granted by current Prime Minister Hun Sen—he didn't exactly seem wracked by remorse. "I feel that most of our compatriots understand that we have much more problems to resolve at the present and in the future, and we have to forget the past," he said. "Let bygones be bygones." Khieu Samphan's cohort Nuon Chea, the "brother number two" behind the regime's devastating forced rural labor program and its brutal purges, was equally unrepentant. Protected under the same immunity, he mused: "We are very sorry not only for the lives of the people of Cambodia, but even for the lives of all animals that suffered because of the war." Well, we're sorry, but these pathetic "apologies" won't do. Nor will Hun Sen's protection of these two mega-criminals, a clear violation of his repeated promises to try Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity, as the United States had insisted. Of course, Hun Sen, a major human rights violator himself, has his own reasons to avoid setting a precedent of accountability. U.S. policy toward Cambodia has been to insist that Khmer Rouge leaders be brought to trial, while acquiescing in Hun Sen's thuggish rule for the sake of "stability." Now the contradictions of this approach are plain for all to see.

LAME ARGUMENT: As President Clinton's Senate trial nears, the air thickens with rumors of a censure deal—and of a White House defense strategy that would challenge this impeachment's constitutionality because it was approved by a lame duck House. This notion springs from the fecund mind of Bruce Ackerman, a left-leaning Yale Law School professor known for his friendly relationship with the First Couple and for his creative, and sometimes convincing, interpretations of constitutional history. This time, however, the professor may have outsmarted himself. In a recent *Washington Post* op-ed, Ackerman restated the case he had first laid out in testimony before the House Judiciary Committee: a lame duck impeachment bill is contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of the Twentieth Amendment, which was adopted in 1933 to shorten the tenure of lame duck Congresses and, hence, to reduce their power. Ackerman argues that, since the amendment's drafters intended to abolish both ordinary lame duck legislation and, more importantly, the possibility of a lame duck House picking the president in the event of an electoral college deadlock, they must have also intended to prevent lame duck impeachment. Thus, the new House must reapprove any impeachment articles before the Senate can consider them. Ackerman's op-ed was answered by one from Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, pointing out that 20 percent of all impeachments of federal judges had begun in one Congress and concluded in the next. This is interesting, but beside the point; impeaching a judge is fundamentally different from impeaching a president (see "Trial and Tribulation," by Akhil Reed Amar, page 17). The real problem with Ackerman's argument is that it makes no sense. The amendment's framers' intent to eliminate presidential selection by a lame duck House has no logical connection to the quite distinct issue of presidential *removal.* Not only does Ackerman cite no evidence that the framers specifically intended to invalidate lame duck impeachments; it is actually more likely that they would have wanted to preserve the impeachment and conviction powers of the lame duck House and Senate. Otherwise, presidents would be unencumbered by the threat of impeachment between Election Day in November and the swearing-in of the new Congress on January 3. No reasonable drafter of such an amendment could have meant to remove all constitutional safeguards against the unlikely but not inconceivable possibility that, say, the president would try to sell government secrets to an enemy nation on November 15. In such an emergency, the country would have to defend itself with the only Congress available, the lame duck one—through lame duck impeachment and, if necessary, lame duck conviction. If Bill Clinton's litigious attorneys are myopic enough to test Ackerman's theory in the courts, they'll surely lose, at the cost of alienating even Democratic senators and establishing yet another presidency-weakening precedent.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE: For all the progress in the fight against AIDS, the disease continues to ravage African Americans. Blacks, who make up only 13 percent of the population, accounted for 57 percent of all new infections last year. But that information wasn't much discussed at the December 19 Harlem AIDS Forum, sponsored by the Reverend Al Sharpton and his National Action Network. Instead, participants spent the bulk of their time spinning AIDS conspiracy theories. *The New York Times* story about the event, nonjudgmentally headlined "CHALLENGING THE CONVENTIONAL STANCE ON AIDS," duly reported the worries of African American health professionals about this, but also went out of its way to note that the paranoid view of "AIDS orthodoxy" had a rational basis in the notorious Tuskegee experiments of a generation ago. Then the *Times* handed a megaphone to Sharpton's cranks. One speaker observed that AIDS was a disease inflicted on blacks by the genocidal World Health Organization. Keidi Obi Awadu, whom the *Times* called "an electric speaker, who also goes by the name 'The Conscious Rasta,'" explained that "the more condoms you're exposed to, the more likely you are to test HIV positive." Lynn Gannett urged black AIDS patients not to take medications. "The drugs can kill you," she said. "I don't agree with everything they may say," Sharpton told the *Times,* "but I think people should hear it. There are in my community a disproportionate amount of victims." Thanks to Al Sharpton there may be even more. •

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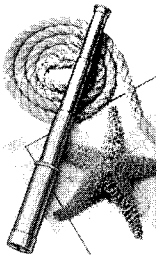

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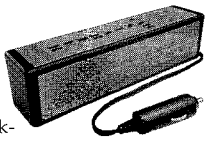

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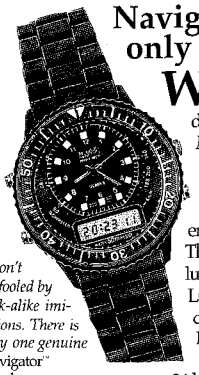

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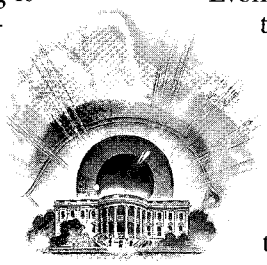
BUSINESS UNUSUAL

By Dana Milbank

On the historic Saturday when the House of Representatives impeached President Clinton, the usual carnival of humanity was on display outside the Northwest Gate of the White House. "CLINTON ATE THE FLESH OF 2 PAKISTANIS" read one of the protesters' signs. The guy with the sign saying "AMERICA, YOU HAVE 5 DAYS TO REPENT" was there, too. But my favorite was a banner that seemed to sum up the day's significance neatly: "THE BLOOD OF WACO IS AVENGED."

At first, this claim seemed outlandish. I'd thought the militia types had pretty much taken care of the revenge thing in Oklahoma City. But, thinking it over, I realized the Waco explanation, essentially a celebration of rough justice, helps to account for the unpopular Republican march toward impeachment. For six years, Clinton's conservative enemies, driven by a visceral hatred of the man, have hoped to punish him for his various crimes against civilization—backing gun control, championing abortion rights, supporting affirmative action, stealing the conservatives' ideas on welfare and the balanced budget, and, yes, cracking down on the Branch Davidians at Waco. Clinton foes failed to get him with Whitewater and Vince Foster and Travelgate and the rest, but, with Bimbroglio, they have the goods. In the eyes of Clinton-haters, the impeachment isn't just about Monica Lewinsky, or sex, or even perjury. It's about revenge.



But the avengers, in pursuit of Clinton, have unwisely (if perhaps inadvertently) turned this personal vendetta into a cultural struggle. What was once about Bill Clinton is now about us. The Republicans, with their harsh rhetoric about morality, rule of law, and military conduct, have raised the stakes, forcing us to choose. Do we want the puritanical "Christian country" that the Republicans praise? Or do we prefer a more secular (and perhaps more permissive) society, which our flawed president represents? The GOP has framed the choice in those terms and, in doing so, has driven the public into Clinton's arms. It doesn't help that one of the GOP's impeachment-trial managers and the Republican leader in the Senate have both mixed with white supremacists. Many Americans don't like Clinton; they think he's a lout and a liar. But his enemies' behavior frightens them more. Better to be a Clinton-defender than a Waco-avenger.

Clinton's post-impeachment speech was widely portrayed in the press as a Democratic "pep rally." To me, it looked more like a marriage ceremony, a sort of renewal of vows for the land's quintessential political couple. Half an hour before the ceremony, ushers arrived to take the press (the guests) to the lawn outside the Oval Office, where a podium and lectern (pulpit) awaited us. The press aides were surprisingly jovial, taking photos of the press gang with a reporter's camera. Across the lawn, caterers were preparing for a banquet in a nearby party tent. The procession began, a long stroll down the Colonnade, which was lined with wreaths. The Secret Service guys came first, like flower girls. (Okay, not quite, but you get the idea.) Next, walking backward and snapping shots, the White House photographer emerged, capturing the moment.

Finally, the bridegroom emerged, with Hillary on his arm. The two were escorted by the best man (Gore) and the maid of honor (Gephardt), and trailed by the minister, a severe-looking John Podesta. Democratic congressmen (the wedding party) gathered around the happy couple. The minister spoke first, solemnly. The best man, who had set aside his differences with the maid of honor for the day, praised the bride.

Eventually, the bridegroom pledged his fidelity to his office, vowing to stay in it until "the last hour of the last day" of his eight years—until term limits do them part. The wedding party applauded and reached out to hug the lucky pair. And so this strange couple, devoted if not to each other then to common political ambition, renewed their commitments.

The only small sign that everything was not hunky-dory was the president's grip on his wife's hand. I found myself concentrating on this small detail, in part because a photographer from Reuters had shoved in front of me, obstructing my view of other details. Midway through the event, Clinton looked down and reached for her hand, and Hillary took his. The president proceeded to squeeze the first lady's hand with painful intensity, the grip more of a drowning man than of a grateful husband. His knuckles whitened, his fingers reddened, and his veins protruded beneath his skin. It must have hurt her, but Hillary showed no pain. Then again, she never does.

Two days later, at the White House Christmas party for the press, Hillary didn't appear. Word spread that she was suffering from leg pain. Later, there were reports that the pain was actually in her back. But I suspect she was upstairs in the residence, icing her aching metacarpals.

Washington is full of prattle about what happens next, but it is just prattle. Nobody yet knows what will happen, though we attach great meaning to the utterances of the senatorial oracles Byrd and Hatch. Another variable is the inscrutable Trent Lott, whose recent words on Iraq leave the impression that his acts may be independent of his thoughts. Only one truth

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remains just as it has since last summer: The votes in the Senate do not exist to remove Clinton. Senators seem inclined to make some show of a trial before closing a censure deal. Meanwhile, Republican moderates like Mike Castle, Sherwood Boehlert, and Benjamin Gilman now tell senators that, even though they (1) voted for impeachment and (2) voted against allowing a censure vote in the House, they nevertheless (3) believe it would be just fine for the Senate to censure Clinton. Now *that's* a vote of conscience.

The White House, for its part, is comfortably back in crisis mode, where aides seem to do their best work. In the days before the impeachment vote, the atmosphere had become surreal. "You felt like, 'How could I be doing my job when this historic thing is happening?'" remarked one top aide. But, on the Monday after the impeachment vote, Clinton made a rare appearance at the senior staff meeting, offering a rallying call to demoralized staffers. "The American people get it right all the time," he told them. "Sometimes, it's in fits and starts, but they do get it right."

In the following days, Clinton scandal-managers huddled, keeping their deliberations isolated even from top staff. At the moment, White House Counsel Charles Ruff has taken the lead, conferring with Chief of Staff Podesta, who represents the political side. Meanwhile, policy aides returned to their battle stations, intent on delivering the president a big boost with the rollout of the January 19 State of the Union and the February 1 budget. "They provide a tether to reality," one senior aide said of the two. The White House figures a strong policy offensive will be its best defense, and with that in mind it plans a series of pyrotechnics starting in early January to trumpet the new agenda. "The only way we keep public support is if we demonstrate the ability to lead and the ability to govern," says one senior adviser. "Without that public support, we're history."

Two days after the president's wedding/pep rally, he hosted a "winter holiday festival" for the press. This surprised many, because Clinton, in his *annus horribilis*, had pretty much avoided reporters. But soon it became clear that the event was just a polite way to cancel the annual White House Christmas parties for the press. After waiting interminably to enter a hot and overcrowded tent, we spent the time elbowing past one another and stepping on children in a frustrated search for food. A woman took to the microphone to say the White House wasn't expecting so many people—doubtful, because each person was invited and cleared in advance after providing name, date of birth, and Social Security number. The freshly impeached Clinton soon emerged to tell the hot and bothered assembly how "cozy" it was (or something to that effect). His statement was misleading and legally inaccurate. The president should apologize for his behavior. Furthermore, he must admit he lied when he called the party "cozy."

But give the president credit. His very appearance was in step with the White House's enduring line: It's business as usual. Impeachment, it seems, has lost its stigma. Some of those who toured the White House Christmas display were amused to find the portrait of Andrew Johnson exhibited prominently—in fact, right next to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's portrait. For Clinton, it must be a comforting juxtaposition. Sure, Johnson was impeached, but he still hangs with FDR. Clinton is determined to prove that impeachment hasn't harmed him a bit. After the president's post-impeachment speech, he plunged into the crowd of Democratic lawmakers, working them as if he were at a fund-raiser. Later that day, he would stand with his national security team to announce an end to hostilities in Iraq. Then he'd head off for more Christmas revelry. Reporters, too, joined the business-as-usual game. In the Fox News booth in the White House basement after Clinton's post-impeachment event, a Redskins game was playing. Sam Donaldson was clowning around at his usual volume, and Gephardt was out in front of the cameras at the White House stakeout. Everything at the White House seemed abnormally normal. •

But not Clinton.

IMPEACH JOHNSON!

By Joshua Zeitz

The story of Andrew Johnson's 1868 impeachment has become a veritable political fable: Persecuted by a Congress run by Radical Republicans who simply didn't like his attitude toward Reconstruction, Johnson was brought to trial for violating a law that was patently unconstitutional. Only because a few brave Republican senators broke ranks and voted for acquittal did the constitutional system, and the Republic, survive.

It is a good yarn, and one we've been hearing a lot about these days, now that the second-ever presidential impeachment trial is at hand. *The New York Times* recounted the affair this way: "After the Civil War, the Radical Republicans in control of Congress were able to override Johnson's vetoes and undermine the policy of leniency toward the defeated South begun under Abraham Lincoln, Johnson's slain predecessor." It then went on to conclude that the episode does "not bode well for high-minded nonpartisanship" in the case of Bill Clinton. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Jeffrey Toobin has called the events of 1868 a constitutional "fiasco" that marked "the low point in impeachment history."

But this conception of history lacks one key element: accuracy. Far from a martyr, Andrew Johnson remains

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the one president in American history who most clearly deserved impeachment and, quite probably, conviction. Johnson openly defied the will of Congress and trampled on the rights of American citizens. Although his trial turned on weak and highly technical charges, it was triggered by his pattern of defiant and, arguably, treasonous conduct—behavior that was clearly what the Founders had in mind when they established impeachment as a remedy for presidential wrongdoing. All of which is relevant today in the following way: Understood properly, Andrew Johnson's trespasses make the modern-day offenses of President Clinton seem trivial by comparison.

Our contemporary understanding of Johnson's impeachment traces back to the early twentieth century, when Columbia University's William Dunning lent academic respectability to a popular version of Reconstruction history pioneered by segregationist Southern Democrats and slavery apologists. Dunning wrote from the point of view of the defeated South and painted the Radical Republicans as villains. His interpretation served the ideological purposes of a majority-white country eager to put the divisions of the nineteenth century behind it, and it thus came to saturate public memory until the very dawn of the civil rights era. Indeed, its indirect influence is visible even in John F. Kennedy's 1955 book *Profiles in Courage*, which taught a generation of Americans to admire Edmund G. Ross, the Kansas Republican senator who cast the vote that acquitted Johnson.

But the real story of Johnson's impeachment should impart much different lessons. It all began in the summer of 1865. With Congress out of session until December, the president summarily invited several former Confederate states to rejoin the Union. He did so despite their recent election of onetime secessionists and Confederate officials to state and federal offices. He also overlooked their passage of "black codes" restricting the movement, property rights, and individual liberties of former slaves. It was an extraordinary seizure of power: Only weeks following the conclusion of a four-year civil war and the first assassination of an American president, Johnson acted unilaterally to readmit rebel states to the Union and to draw back into public office men who had committed high treason against the United States—men who were still unreconciled to the abolition of slavery.

Congress refused to acknowledge this brief period of "Presidential Reconstruction." The Republican majority instead passed a series of laws and a constitutional amendment guaranteeing former slaves fundamental personal and economic liberties, all over Johnson's veto or opposition. But the president still would not relent. Instead, he counteracted a vital provision of the Freedman's Bureau Act by returning to former slaveholders abandoned lands that the Union Army had seized and subsequently doled out to former slaves; he also violated the Test Oath Act by appointing to office persons who could not swear a mandatory oath that they had not served the Confederacy.

In 1867, Congress passed (again over Johnson's veto) an act dividing the South into military districts and placing the former Confederate states under martial law pending their adoption of suitable constitutions guaranteeing civil liberties to former slaves. The president proceeded to spend the better part of 1867 defying the Military Reconstruction Act. Although the law empowered him to remove recalcitrant Southern officeholders, Johnson refused, claiming that he could not constitutionally warrant the use of the military for such purposes. Johnson also forbade the Army to try violations of federal law in its courts or to prohibit activities that were not in specific violation of federal or local statutes. In effect, he canceled out the very notion of martial law and refused to execute statutes enacted over his veto.

Johnson aggravated these acts with rhetorical offenses that threatened not just decorum but constitutional stability. On one occasion, he indicated his willingness to "oppose" those laws that he deemed "unconstitutional," with full knowledge that such "executive resistance ... would likely produce violent collision between respective adherents to the two branches of government." Speaking to a crowd in Cleveland during his disastrous "swing around the circle" campaign tour of late 1866, Johnson was heckled by cries of "hang Jeff Davis!" To this he responded: "Why not hang Thad Stevens [leader of the House Republicans] and Wendell Phillips [a noted Boston abolitionist]? I can tell you, my countrymen, I have been fighting traitors in the South, and ... I am prepared to fight traitors at the North, God being willing with your help."

Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens saw all of this for what it was: a systematic effort to thwart the properly expressed will of Congress and to lend aid and comfort to unrepentant enemies of the Union. Yet, throughout 1867, the House refused his repeated calls to impeach Johnson; most members rejected his argument that presidential actions need not be manifestly illegal to be impeachable.

Then, the president supplied radicals with just the legal pretense they needed to sway their more cautious colleagues. The event that triggered Johnson's indictment by the lower chamber was his violation in 1868 of the Tenure of Office Act, a law that required the president to seek Senate approval before removing Cabinet officials. When Johnson fired War Secretary Edwin Stanton despite congressional objections, the House drew up and passed eleven impeachment articles, nine of which focused on his violation of this statute. Only one article, the tenth, came close to addressing Stevens's concerns, and it did so only indirectly, focusing on Johnson's "certain intemperate, inflammatory and scandalous harangues" and "loud threats and bitter menaces as well against Congress."

Unfortunately, since none of the articles charged Johnson with his more serious constitutional offenses, what followed was a trial full of legal hairsplitting. The president's attorneys argued technicalities—for

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instance, that the Tenure of Office Act didn't really apply to Stanton since he was a Lincoln administration holdover, and the act referred only to appointees of the current chief executive. (They also argued, rightly, that the law was itself unconstitutional, although they had difficulty explaining why Johnson had initially complied with its provisions, asserting its unconstitutionality only after he failed to obtain the Senate's consent in Stanton's dismissal.) Forced to make its judgment exclusively on these grounds, the Senate failed to convict, by the narrowest of margins.

The question, of course, is whether Johnson deserved to be impeached for his other, more serious acts. And here the case seems rather compelling. While it's true the Republican Congress may not have been acting within its own constitutional authority all of the time, the fact remains that Johnson was colluding with enemies of the Union to block the federal government's right as victor to dictate the terms of peace; he was inciting violence against Congress; he was usurping the Supreme Court's powers of judicial review; and he was failing to take care that the laws be faithfully executed. Perhaps most important, he was trampling upon the individual rights of newly freed slaves.

Intellectually honest people can disagree whether the verdict ultimately served the nation's long-term interests. But two things seem clear. First, by comparison to Johnson's actions, Bill Clinton's offenses are fairly negligible—hardly the kind of constitutionally threatening acts for which impeachment ought to be reserved. Second, the current impeachment debacle demonstrates just how far the party of Lincoln has declined since the days it contemplated removing a president over the weighty issues of slavery, civil rights, and insurrection, rather than over the legal definition of sexual relations.

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ON THE HILL

BYRD BRAIN

By David Plotz

These days you can barely walk down the street in Washington without being accosted by some Wise Man hawking scandal advice. Former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole is selling his complicated censure scheme. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford are marketing their own censure proposal. Sundry other formers—Lloyd Cutler, Richard Ben-Veniste, Robert Drinan—have weighed in authoritatively as well.

Now that Bimbroglio has graduated to the Senate, it's not surprising that these old lions (or perhaps "old badgers") have been joined by Democratic Senator Robert C. Byrd, the extremely senior gentleman from West Virginia and the former Senate majority leader. With his florid oratorical style and his (now-tamed) white pompadour, the 81-year-old Byrd has always looked and sounded like a grand senator (or at least like a high school student's *idea* of a grand senator). But, since Democrats lost the Senate and he lost the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee in 1994, Byrd has sulked in the shadows, ignored and largely powerless.

So these recent weeks have been a sweet redemption for the West Virginian. He has been glorying in the attention of journalists and other senators who are beseeching him for his deep thoughts about What the Senate Should Do. Is censure permitted? If there's a trial, what are the rules? According to a friend of Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York senator sought Byrd's counsel last week in preparation for a trial. On the other side of the aisle, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has said that he would look to Byrd for guidance.

Byrd's every utterance is now being analyzed ferociously for hidden meaning. When he declared on December 21, for example, that "whether there is a trial or whether there is some other solution, that decision must be made by senators, and it must be bipartisan," both sides went on the offensive. According to Republicans (or at least *The Washington Times*), Byrd was warning the White House to butt out and stop trying to lobby senators. According to Democrats, Byrd was giving his official imprimatur to the notion that Clinton could be censured without a trial.

To be sure, there is good reason to heed Byrd on the subject of impeachment trials in the Senate. Byrd wrote the book on it, drafting *Procedures and Guidelines for Impeachment Trials in the United States Senate* in 1974. He is the only senator to have been majority leader during two impeachment trials (of federal judges) resulting in conviction. He has spent his 40 years in the upper house mastering its procedural arcana. He reads and rereads *Riddick's Senate Procedure.* He is the author of the "magisterial" *The Senate: 1789–1989.* (It is *always* called "magisterial," which means above all that it is very lengthy.)

But, before senators pay too much tribute to Byrd's sagacity, they should ask themselves if he really is the person who should be the Senate's conscience on this issue. Byrd's level of knowledge is not so much impressive as it is frightening. His mania for the subject of rules is incredible. Byrd is the most pedantic teacher you ever had, the office manager who won't let you take a second pad of Post-Its, the kind of boss who makes his staffers take spelling tests. In short, Byrd is a legislator who has a masterful grasp of the picayune and no grasp at all of the big picture. He is the triumph of process

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over judgment. If you want this scandal to be resolved with technical purity, Byrd is your man. If you want it to be resolved with wisdom, look elsewhere.

In *The Senate: 1789–1989*, Byrd writes a truly awesome account of the rules of the Senate. There are whole chapters on filibusters, a chart comparing eighteenth century rules to current ones, a history of cloture. But what the work reveals above all is the nit-picking obsessiveness of Byrd's mind. He cares about the Senate's process more than any substance. "It is always amazing, sometimes embarrassing, to see senators who, having been here for years, reveal an utter ignorance of the rules," begins one typical section. Byrd goes on to lay out, at great length, "some procedural errors that too frequently occur in the Senate."

For example: "When a senator asks for the immediate consideration of a bill or resolution, the chair should not say 'without objection' before the clerk states the title of the measure. The title should first be stated, in order to inform the Senate what the resolution or bill is about, before the chair asks the Senate whether or not it will consent to proceed to consider the measure."

A chapter on the Senate in movies includes Byrd's astounding account of *Advise and Consent*. Others watch that movie and see a story about power and politics. What does Byrd see? "*Advise and Consent* is technically quite accurate.... The actions of the senators and the presiding officer are a bit exaggerated, however, and, in several instances, not in keeping with the rules of the real Senate, as when Senator Van Ackerman couples a discharge motion, which must lie over for a day, with a motion to vote on the discharged nomination 'here and now.' Such a motion would be declared out of order by the presiding officer of the Senate."

The point is not that Senate rules aren't important or aren't necessary for an impeachment trial. They are. It is that Byrd has focused on the rules to the exclusion of, well, just about everything else. When he describes an important piece of legislation, he skips over what the legislation is supposed to do and recounts lovingly the procedural maneuvers required to get the bill passed. Majority Leader Byrd used to keep the Senate in session on Fridays much to the annoyance of his colleagues. As *The Washington Post* reports, when Howard Baker replaced Byrd as Senate majority leader in 1981, Byrd used to embarrass his successor by publicly correcting him about minor points of order.

It is this obsession with rules that has turned what might have been a great career into a forgettable one. Byrd is a true American success story. Abandoned by his father after his mother died, he was raised in hard-scrabble Appalachian poverty by an aunt and coal-mining uncle. He worked as a welder and a butcher before getting elected to the West Virginia statehouse. In 1952 he won a seat in Congress, moved up to the Senate in 1958, then toiled his way from assistant majority whip to whip to majority leader. At every stage, he outworked his rivals. Byrd is relentlessly self-improving. He earned a law degree while in Congress, and he has given himself a marvelous classical education (a fact he will never let anyone forget). He is also incorruptible and fiercely devoted to the idea of public service as an honor.

But Byrd's congressional exploits have never matched his gumption. In 1964, he demonstrated his growing mastery of procedure by filibustering the Civil Rights Act for more than 14 hours, one of the longest such delays in Senate history. Several years later, Byrd voted against the Supreme Court nomination of Thurgood Marshall. (Byrd briefly belonged to the Ku Klux Klan in his twenties, a misstep he has apologized for but never adequately explained. He has written that, at the time, he believed the Klan was "an effective force in the struggle against communism and in the promotion of traditional American values," which sounds more like a Klan advertisement than sincere remorse.)

And, as a legislator, Byrd has accomplished little—unless you count getting most of the state of West Virginia named after him. In 1988, he retired from the majority leader's job to chair the Appropriations Committee. He used that position to uproot government agencies from D.C. to West Virginia, relocating parts of the Coast Guard, Treasury Department, FBI, ATF, and other departments to the Mountain State. ("He has become the most important economic factor in our state," an aide to West Virginia's governor said in 1991.) As for Byrd's major senatorial achievements, they are all procedure-oriented nonachievements: he blocked the Balanced Budget Amendment, thwarted the line-item veto for years, and slowed down Republican Contract with America legislation in 1995.

Byrd is a kind of simulacrum of a senator. He does everything that a senator is supposed to do except what truly matters: pass good ideas into law. He drafts rules, performs parliamentary maneuvers, delivers pork, and gives speeches. And, Lord, does he speechify! Every appearance in the Senate chamber is an occasion for a history lesson, another chance to show off. In 1994, he quoted every Shakespeare play on the Senate floor. Last year's highway funding bill prompted an endless soliloquy on the roads of the Persian empire and the horse of the emperor Darius. His September 9 stem-winder on the Lewinsky scandal, "No Rush to Judgment," wound from the poetry of Omar Khayyám to Jesus among the Pharisees to Ecclesiastes to George Washington to sundry other Founding Fathers to an obscure patriotic poem to Alexander Hamilton.

Come to think of it, perhaps there is a reason to be glad Byrd will be so zealously monitoring Senate compliance with its rules on impeachment. One of those rules says that, during the trial, senators—even very, very senior senators—must remain silent at all times.

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TRIAL AND TRIBULATION

By Akhil Reed Amar

No president is above the law, but the law for presidents is different than for others, at least in cases of impeachment. This is probably good news for Bill Clinton but bad news for senators seeking quick and, preferably, easy answers to the hard questions raised by putting a president on trial. Some senators—Robert Byrd comes to mind—might be tempted to resolve tough issues by appealing to a trio of impeachment cases in the 1980s. (Before that, the last impeachment trial occurred in 1936.) But these three cases involved federal district judges and are thus constitutionally far afield. For better or worse, the Clinton case is literally unprecedented: never before in American history has a duly elected president been impeached.

Sound constitutional judgment in the weeks and months ahead will require appeal to first principles, not flawed precedents. Compared to the 1980s cases, Clinton's Senate trial will involve a distinct cast of characters, will raise unique issues of legal ethics, and will involve a different sequence of judicial proceedings. Most important of all, a trial of any sort will raise intricate issues of procedure and proof far more complex than anything that arose in the 1980s, and will ultimately call for a more nuanced interpretation of "high crimes and misdemeanors." Any Senate veteran who thinks he has seen it all before should think again.

For starters, note the unique cast of our impending drama. In presidential impeachments, the chief justice of the United States, who plays no role in any other impeachment, must "preside" over the Senate trial according to the command of Article I, section 3. His very presence should remind us that this inherently political trial must be scrupulously fair to the president in both reality and appearance. (The regular presiding officer of the Senate under section 3 is the vice president of the United States, whom the Framers wisely excluded from a trial that could end with his winning the defendant's job. This mandatory recusal rule made even more sense at the Founding, when presidents did not handpick their vice presidents, who were more likely to be rivals than partners.) If, for some reason, a chief justice were to deem a particular impeachment trial utterly unfair and inherently improper, might he simply refuse to take the chair? In the wake of such a refusal, could a "trial" nonetheless proceed? If so, would it be seen as legitimate at home and abroad? These foundation-shaking questions, implicating the tops of all three branches of government, never arise in other impeachments.

The pivotal role of the chief justice has profound implications for the proper ethical relations between senators and the president. Suppose a sudden illness were to require the chief to resign. Although the senior associate justice might presumably fill in temporarily, at some point a new chief would need to be installed, and Article II, section 2 tells us how this would happen. The president would appoint, with the advice and consent of the Senate, a new chief. In other words, even in the middle of a trial, the judges and the judged might need to confer and collaborate to pick the permanent presiding officer. Stranger things have happened.

The point is that, even during the pendency of an impeachment trial, the Senate and the president must work together to do the people's business. Vacant appointments must be filled, treaties considered, laws enacted, budgets approved, foreign policy—even war—conducted. Even as senators sit as detached judges and jurors over defendant Bill Clinton every afternoon (bound by an oath of impartiality as prescribed under Article I, section 3), they must as legislators work closely with fellow lawmaker Bill Clinton every morning. Once again, this is different from impeachments of, say, federal district judges. In these low-level impeachments, senators may be free to shun all contact with the defendant, analogizing such meetings to "jury tampering." But this finicky standard of legal ethics makes no constitutional sense when the man in the dock is the president, with whom parliament must parley.

Consider next the typical sequence of judicial proceedings in presidential and nonpresidential impeachments. In two of the three district judge impeachments during the 1980s, Senate trials occurred *after* the judges had been tried and convicted of statutory crimes in ordinary courts. The Constitution does not require this sequence, but the Framers expected that it would often make sense. District judges would be scattered across

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the continent, as would the evidence of and witnesses to their wrongdoing. Congress, by contrast, would sit in the capital, weeks away from the most remote hinterlands. Given this geography, the Founders anticipated that the easiest venue to gather all the evidence and witnesses would often be in a trial held in the judge's home district. After such a trial, the Senate's job in impeachment would be much easier—senators could simply take as given the facts duly found beyond reasonable doubt in an ordinary court following strict evidentiary rules and affording procedural rights and other safeguards to the defendant.

But this system generally will not work in presidential impeachments. Given his unique and awesome constitutional powers, the president can often inflict great harm on the nation without violating any specific criminal statute. Thus, presidential impeachments are less likely to simply track ordinary prosecutions and may charge the chief executive with abuses of power beyond the criminal code. More fundamentally, it is doubtful under Article II that a sitting president may be forced to stand trial in an ordinary criminal court. In a couple of Federalist Papers (Numbers 69 and 77), Hamilton suggested that an incumbent president must *first* be tried in the

Richard Milhous Clinton

Democrats and like-minded pundits insist that Bill Clinton is not Richard Nixon and that this scandal is not Watergate. I agree with the latter point, but, in broader personal and political terms, the similarities between the two most scandal-plagued presidents of the postwar era are actually striking. Consider the following:

Each was born into a white, non-East Coast family of modest means, and, despite rising through the meritocracy as a result of unusual intelligence and ferocious ambition, neither gained full acceptance from Eastern elites or the media. Each man also quickly earned a reputation for shading the truth, as exemplified by the monikers "Tricky Dick" and "Slick Willie." Even their own political allies have generally acknowledged these personal failings. Indeed, in striking contrast to presidents like JFK and Ronald Reagan, Nixon and Clinton both achieved the greatest success possible in American politics while generating little widespread affection for themselves as individuals.

Each became known, thanks especially to an incredible capacity to take punishment, as a comeback specialist, repeatedly recovering from what appeared to be total political catastrophe. Just think of Nixon's 1952 campaign scandal, which he barely survived by giving the lachrymose "Checkers" speech, or his disastrous 1962 run for the governorship of California, which ended with the memorable phrase, "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore." Clinton, of course, has survived his early defeat as governor of Arkansas, his disastrous speech at the 1988 Democratic convention, the Gennifer Flowers scandal, the draft scandal, Whitewater, Filegate, Travelgate, and—so far—the Lewinsky scandal.

Each became president in the wake of, and in partial reaction to, a fundamental ideological shift in American politics: the rise of 1960s liberalism and the Great Society for Nixon; Reaganism for Clinton. Nixon saw his own political victories as the triumph of the moderate and conservative "silent majority" over the minority of liberal elitists who had run the country between 1961 and 1969. Clinton, in 1992, ran heavily on the idea that in at least one key area—health care—he would reverse the Reagan legacy and bring back activist government. Yet both men ironically ended up presiding over their own political party's surrender to that shift. Nixon continued, and in many ways expanded, the Great Society (creating the EPA, among other accomplishments) and even imposed socialistic wage and price controls. Clinton, of course, declared that the "era of big government is over." Indeed, his major social policy achievement has been the radical paring back of welfare.

Each, in the eyes of the winning side in these ideological shifts, nonetheless became the symbol of what was most despised about the losing side. To 1960s liberals, Nixon symbolized the dark side of the America of the 1950s: paranoid, resentful, parochial, untrustworthy, and mean. He was the alter ego of Joe McCarthy. To 1990s conservatives, Clinton symbolizes the dark side of the America of the 1960s: irresponsible, amoral, unpatriotic, untrustworthy, and profligate. He is the alter ego of Jane Fonda. In each case, the men's repeated ability to bounce back from adversity has only intensified the hatred. In gatherings of true believers, the mere mention of the name "Nixon" once elicited loud hisses, and the same is now true of Clinton. If Kennedy and Reagan are the two most beloved presidents in postwar American history, Nixon and Clinton are easily the most hated.

Finally, each has tried to escape growing domestic difficulties through "against type" foreign policy initiatives. Indeed, during his recent Middle East trip, Clinton gave signs he was thinking of following the "Nixon in China" model in a particularly misguided way: by becoming the president who would finally pressure Israel into making major concessions to the Palestinians.

One may well feel (as I do) that Nixon deserved his political fate and that Clinton, for all his faults, has not come close to deserving what has now befallen him. Nonetheless, it is hard not to see both men, in a way, as classic scapegoats, suited both by their flawed personalities and by the pattern of their careers to serve as sacrificial victims. They both served useful, if somewhat distasteful, political purposes, acquiescing in their political opponents' victory in a great ideological conflict and helping shape the new political consensus. And, after doing this, each was ritually executed on the altar of political scandal to expiate the sins and (so their opponents hoped) forever seal the demise of the defeated political and cultural forces.

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Senate; only after his removal (via conviction or resignation or the natural expiration of his term) would ordinary courts have a crack at him. This impeachment-first rule has a strong bipartisan pedigree—affirmed two centuries ago by Senator (and later Chief Justice) Oliver Ellsworth, Vice President John Adams, and President Thomas Jefferson, and reiterated during the Nixon impeachment crisis by then-Solicitor General Robert Bork on the right and Professor Charles Black on the left. The rule also makes good structural sense. A president represents the nation and may need to pursue sound national policies that will render him unpopular in certain localities—just imagine Lincoln's poll numbers in South Carolina in early 1861. While in office, the president should not be obstructed by a grand or petit jury from any one locality, whether Charleston or Little Rock or the District of Columbia. The House and the Senate represent the conscience of the entire nation, and thus they are the only grand and petit juries that a sitting president must answer to.

But note the huge complications all this will raise concerning issues of evidentiary procedure and proof. In an actual trial of Bill Clinton, the Senate will not be able to simply point to an earlier judicial proceeding that clearly established the relevant facts beyond reasonable doubt. The Senate will be obliged to find the facts for itself. But how? What precisely will the rules of evidence be? Will the federal hearsay rule—and its countless exceptions—be enforced? Even if senators try to dodge the unseemly business of fact-finding in this particular case by using Kenneth Starr's grand jury transcripts and the like as "evidence," what will happen if the president's lawyers insist—as fairness surely entitles them to do—on cross-examining every relevant witness? Given that the Senate is not accustomed to trying cases—and neither is William Rehnquist, for that matter—the evidentiary problems that could arise are truly mammoth, unlike any the Senate has seen in the modern era. Indeed, one of the tools that the Senate used in the 1980s impeachment cases to cut the evidentiary monster down to size—delegating fact-gathering to a committee—is politically unimaginable, and perhaps unconstitutional, in presidential impeachments. (Could such a committee meet without the presence of the chief justice as a presiding officer? On the other hand, could the chief ever preside over such a rump?)

And then there's the pesky definitional problem posed by "high crimes and misdemeanors." A slim and partisan majority of the lame duck House deemed Clinton's misdeeds impeachable, but the Senate as the final judge must decide for itself. (Similarly, ordinary judges are free to reject prosecutors' overly zealous interpretations of criminal laws.) Even if the Senate deems Clinton's crimes technically impeachable, it need not vote to convict unless it also thinks that the punishment—mandatory removal from office, under Article II, section 4—fits the crime. (Analogously, every criminal trial jury has the inherent power to acquit against the evidence if it deems punishment unjust.) In impeachment, the Senate sits as both judge and jury, finding the facts, judging the law, and embodying the conscience of the community. In Clinton's case, the basic question reduces to this: Is perjury about a sexual matter a "high crime" that justifies ousting a duly elected president?

Some senators may say yes, and others no, but none should say that this open question has already been resolved because a pair of judges were impeached and removed for perjury a decade ago. To begin with, one of these judges (Walter Nixon—no relation) had already been convicted, sentenced, and imprisoned by an ordinary criminal court. On these facts, House impeachment and Senate conviction merely reaffirmed the commonsensical notion that the man should not continue to get paid for being a judge while doing no judicial business behind bars. The other judge—Alcee Hastings—was impeached and removed for lying under oath not about some sexual matter but about financial misconduct that in turn suggested judicial corruption. (Hastings had earlier won an acquittal in a bribery trial, but Congress thought he had lied in that trial and elsewhere.)

But, more important, we must ask whether these Senate adjudications concerning the "high crimes" of lower judges stand as sturdy precedents when pondering the possible "high crimes" of presidents. A blinkered textualist might say so, pointing to Article II, section 4: "The President, Vice President and all civil officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." This clause lumps together presidential impeachments with all others (vice presidents, judges, justices, Cabinet officers, inferior officers) and uses the same linguistic standard (high crimes) across the board.

At first this seems a strong argument. But it crumbles on closer inspection—and every senator should intuitively understand why. Consider another patch of constitutional text familiar to every senator and implicating the Senate as a judge, of sorts. According to Article II, section 2, "by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, [the president] shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Court, and ... other Officers of the United States." If we applied the same blinkered textualism to this clause, we would say that the Senate must give the exact same deference to a president's choice for Supreme Court justice that it would give to a president's choice for his Cabinet, and that the Senate should never apply a stricter standard when considering a nomination to the Supreme Court than to a district court. After all, this clause lumps together all officers, high and low, executive and judicial, and uses the same linguistic standard (advice and consent). But this has never been the Senate's view of the matter—and rightly so. The Senate has rejected blinkered textualism in favor of a more structural and holistic approach that ponders *all* the texts of the Constitution and considers their interrelation. Other parts of the Constitution establish important differences between, say, Cabinet officers and judges. Cabinet officers are part of the president's executive branch team under Article II.

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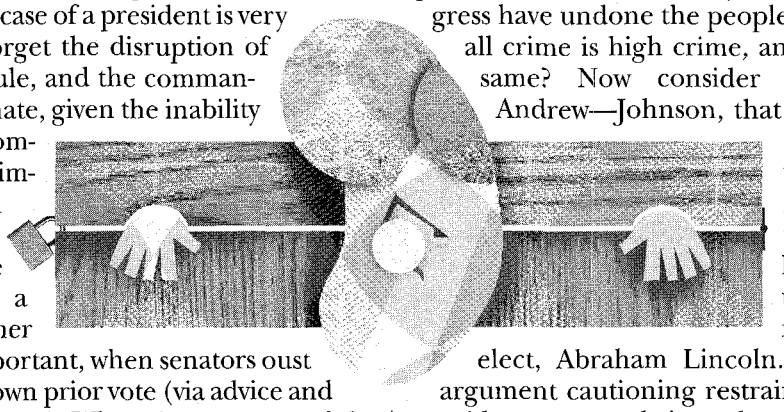
They answer to him (quite literally, in the Article II, section 2 Opinions Clause) and will leave when he leaves. Federal judges, though perhaps appointed to further the president's agenda, are not part of the president's team in the same sense. Their independence is secured by life tenure under Article III—a separate article for a separate branch. In light of these important constitutional differences, the Senate has always given the president far more leeway in naming his own executive team than in proposing judicial nominees. And, even within a single branch, the Senate scrutinizes a nominee to the Supreme Court more intensely than a nominee to some lower court. Just ask Robert Bork.

Now apply this structural insight to the "high crimes" clause, and count the ways in which presidential impeachments are qualitatively different from all others. When senators remove one of 1,000 federal judges (or even one of nine justices), they are not transforming an entire branch of government. But that is exactly what happens when they oust America's only president, in whom all executive power is vested by the first sentence of Article II. In the case of a judge, a long and grueling impeachment trial itself inflicts no great trauma on the country—but, again, the case of a president is very different. (And don't forget the disruption of the chief justice's schedule, and the commandeering of the entire Senate, given the inability to shunt things off to committee.) Presidential impeachments involve high statecraft and international affairs—the entire world is watching—in a manner wholly unlike other impeachments. Most important, when senators oust a judge, they undo their own prior vote (via advice and consent to judicial nominees). When they remove a duly elected president, they undo the votes of millions of ordinary Americans on Election Day. This is not something that senators should do lightly, lest we slide toward a kind of parliamentary government that our entire structure of government was designed to repudiate. Although the Philadelphia Framers may not have anticipated the rise of a populist presidency, later generations of Americans restructured the Philadelphians' electoral college, via the Twelfth Amendment and other election reforms, precisely to facilitate such a presidency. Narrow arguments from the high crimes clause in isolation fail to see how holistic constitutional analysis must take account of post-Founding constitutional developments.



To recast these points about constitutional structure into the language of policy, even if the Senate decides that all perjury—of any sort, by any officer—is an impeachable high crime, senators must further decide whether a given perjury warrants removal as a matter of sound judgment and statesmanship. In making this decision, they must be sensitive to the ways in which the presidency is a very different office from a federal district judgeship. Where extremely "high crimes" are implicated—treason or tyranny—senators should probably be quicker to pull the trigger on a bad president, whose office enables him unilaterally to do many dangerous things. (A single bad judge, by contrast, is hemmed in by colleagues and higher courts.) But where borderline or low "high crimes" are involved, the Senate would be wise to spare the people's president—especially if his crimes reflect character flaws that the people duly considered before voting for him, or if the people continue to support him even after the facts come to light.

Thus the relevant precedents for conscientious senators to ponder are *presidential* precedents. To counterbalance the 1980s trio of impeachments, let's look at a trio of presidents over the centuries who had their own troubles with Congress. Begin with Andrew Jackson, who killed a man in a duel before he was elected president. Technically, this was a crime, although it was rarely prosecuted in Jackson's day. Should Congress have impeached and removed Jackson even if the people who elected him knew about his crime and voted for him anyway? The duel Jackson fought concerned his wife's honor and chastity. Suppose Jackson had lied under oath to protect his wife's honor. Again, suppose the people knew all this when they voted for him. Should Congress have undone the people's votes on a theory that all crime is high crime, and that all perjury is the same? Now consider the next presidential Andrew—Johnson, that is. Given our structural analysis, it seems relevant that Johnson was never elected president in his own right and that he was in fact working to undo the policies of the man the people did elect, Abraham Lincoln. If ever our structural argument cautioning restraint in ousting an elected president were weak, it was here, since Johnson lacked a genuine electoral mandate. And his policies toward unrepentant rebels could have been viewed as akin to treason, giving aid and comfort to men who were—not to mince words—traitors (see "Impeach Johnson!" by Joshua Zeitz, page 13). And yet even here—an unelected president cozying up to actual traitors—the Senate acquitted. Finally, consider President Nixon, whose extremely "high crimes" and gross abuses of official power posed a threat to our basic constitutional system. Although Nixon was elected by the people, his own unprecedented use of political espionage and sabotage tainted his mandate, in the same way that bribing electors would have. When all the facts were brought to light and the tapes came out, the people did indeed turn against him, prompting leaders of both parties to conclude that the time had come for him to go.

William Jefferson Clinton is not above the law. But the law that the Senate must apply is the law applicable to presidents, not the law applicable to district judges. In trying a man whose name has eerily intertwined with that of Nixon again and again, the Senate must remember that Bill Clinton is best judged in light of the case of Richard Nixon, not the case of Walter Nixon. •

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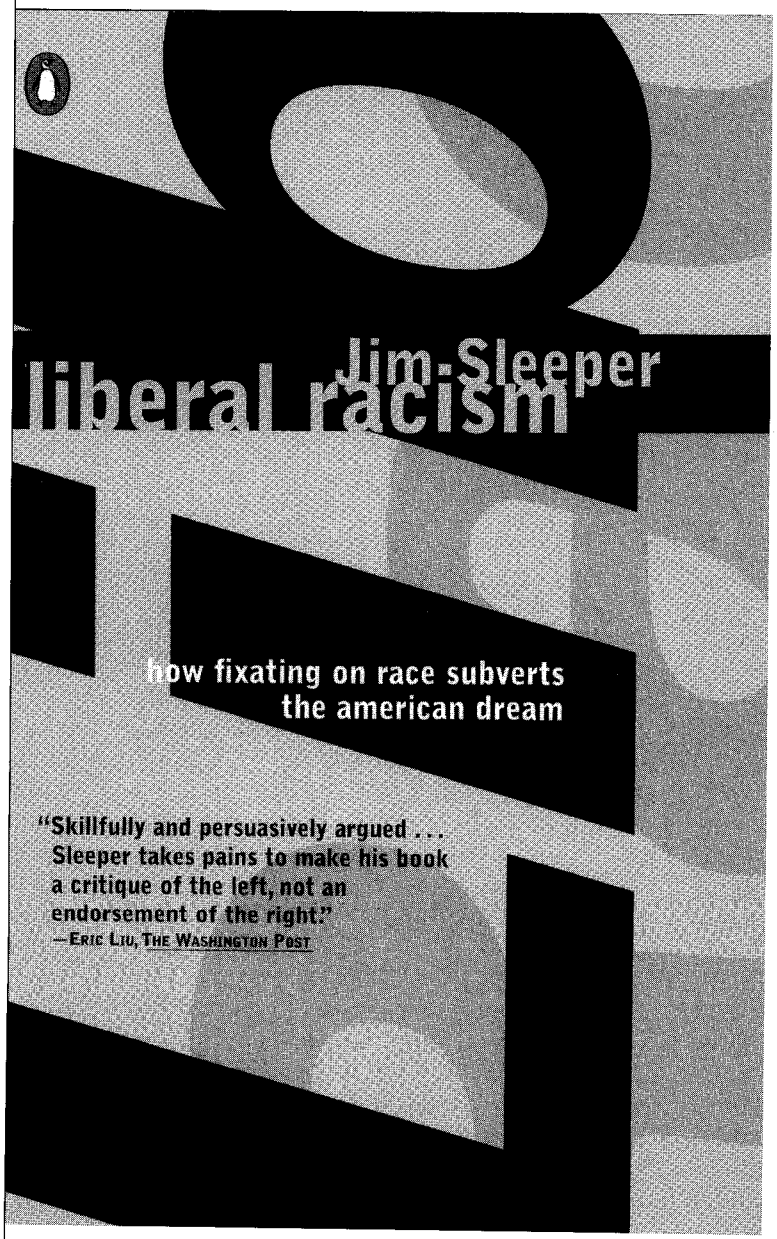
Is there anything left to say about race in America?

Yes. And Jim Sleeper's *Liberal Racism* says it well.


Jim Sleeper
liberal racism
how fixating on race subverts the american dream
"Skillfully and persuasively argued . . . Sleeper takes pains to make his book a critique of the left, not an endorsement of the right."
—Eric Liu, The Washington Post

"Like other writers, Jim Sleeper emphasizes the importance of overcoming a fragmenting culture, but he has a keener sense of the role of market capitalism, as well as liberal ideology. His *Liberal Racism* is the most intellectually sophisticated of these critiques, the most resistant to ideological formula. It is also the only one that **treats race relations as more than a crisis in black and white.**"
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SECURITY RISK

By Jonathan Chait

From a distance, Washington's latest undertaking to save Social Security looks like all of the other budgetary brouhahas that periodically send the Beltway's denizens into a tizzy. There are the earnest policy wonks brandishing ominous-looking charts, the president and elder statesmen in Congress speaking in somber tones about the need for bipartisan cooperation. And so, one might guess, in all likelihood the result will be the same as it has been in most such occurrences: after an extended period of hand-wringing, the wonks and the president and the Congress will have a sit-down and agree on some technical fix that makes the problem go away without unduly bothering the rest of us.

It might look this way, but in fact something altogether different, and far more important, is happening. The ritual deliberation about keeping Social Security in the black has occasioned a larger argument about whether Social Security will continue to be anything like Social Security—that is, not how much of a pension the government should guarantee its citizens, but whether such a guarantee should exist at all. It is ultimately not a technical question but a moral and political one.

This may seem surprising. Social Security, we have been endlessly reminded, is the "third rail" of politics—touch it and you die. This is the most popular federal program, held sacrosanct by millions of politically active beneficiaries and backed by a nearly omnipotent elderly lobby. It is difficult to believe that, under these conditions, elected officials would contemplate changes so dramatic that they would alter the program's very purpose. Yet they are. The ground has shifted rapidly beneath our feet in such a way as to be undetectable to all but the sort of people who pore over actuarial tables and eagerly devour the reports of advisory commissions. It has now reached the point where the notion of preserving Social Security in its current form—even a scaled-back version—has been all but abandoned by the politicians who count.

How has this come about? It begins with the well-known threat of insolvency that has plagued Social Security for years. Social Security benefits are paid mostly by current workers. During the prime working years of the baby-boom generation, this arrangement has meant that every retiree has been supported by a large number of workers. In the past, Congress has taken advantage of this situation by maintaining a surplus (which it uses to help cover the deficit) and dishing out regular benefit increases, usually timed to achieve maximum impact in election years. However, the impending retirement of the baby boomers will turn the worker-retiree ratio around, a prospect that has forced Congress to contemplate the far less gratifying task of taking some of those benefit increases back, which it has generally done with less swiftness and more acrimony.

Hence, Social Security has remained in a constant state of crisis for more than a decade and a half. To the unwashed masses, it remains as popular as ever. But, among policymakers and intellectuals, what was once a shining achievement of progressive governance has lost its luster. Social Security has become slightly disreputable—a big government relic associated with greedy geezers and demagogic liberal politicians who remain willfully blind to demographic and economic imperatives.

Meanwhile, the economic conditions that gave rise to Social Security have grown ever more distant and fuzzy. Americans in the 1930s considered the stock market risky and worried about dying destitute—fears that seem almost quaint today. And, as the growing number of retirees has shrunk the rate of return on Social Security taxes, a booming stock market has made private investment ever more appealing.

In this fertile soil, a radical notion called Social Security privatization has taken root. While the idea has been around for many years, until recently its constituency never reached much beyond right-wing think tanks and Ayn Rand devotees. Now, however, the erosion of Social Security's prestige has given new currency to privatization, on both sides of the partisan divide. Indeed, the idea has progressed through the corridors of power so swiftly that it has become the central criterion of Social Security reform. Newspaper articles and interest groups now judge various proposals not on what they do to save Social Security but on how far they go toward full privatization.

What does this mean, though? The name is slightly misleading. "Privatization" typically means hiring a private company to do the same job government used to

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do—say, replacing a town's garbage collectors with a private company. Privatizing Social Security, though, does not mean subcontracting the work of running Social Security to a private firm. It means embracing an entirely different philosophy. Under Social Security, the risk and responsibility associated with planning one's retirement are spread across the entire workforce. So currently you pay taxes into a giant single fund, and the government provides you a benefit, which it calculates based on your contributions and need. Under a privatized system, risk would be concentrated on the individual—meaning that your Social Security taxes would go into a personal account and your retirement income would depend on how much salary you earned while working and how shrewdly (or luckily) you invested it.

Privatized Social Security, then, would eschew the defining features of Social Security. Income redistribution—Social Security's great progressive achievement—would not be possible under a privatized system. Currently, the Social Security formula is fixed to give a better deal to the poor than to the rich. For instance, someone who earns $30,000 every year for his entire career pays half as much Social Security tax as someone who earns $60,000 a year for his entire career, but gets just 29 percent less in benefits upon retirement. These sorts of transfers can happen only because everybody's Social Security taxes go into one big pot. If everybody saves for himself, you can't give the poor a better deal.

And, of course, there is more to Social Security than protecting those of relatively modest means. As social insurance, it protects individuals from the misfortunes of brute luck. Under a privatized system, by contrast, individuals would be at the mercy of forces beyond their control, such as the hazards of the market. While it is true that stocks tend to bear high returns over the long run, this fact would not help the unfortunate souls whose portfolios take a dive right before they retire. Gary Burtless of the Brookings Institution conducted a study in which he supposed that workers through the last century had put a portion of their salary into a stock index fund every year until retirement—a reasonable approximation of how a privatized system might function. He found that each worker's ultimate fortune would have depended entirely on what year he or she stopped working. Workers who retired in 1969 would have been able to spend the rest of their lives living on slightly higher incomes than they had enjoyed while they were working. Those who retired six years later would have had to make do on less than 40 percent of their working incomes.

Even people who earned the same amount of money, then, could have radically different retirement incomes from a privatized system. Suppose two workers each earned the same total salary through their working careers, but one earned more at a young age while the other earned more at an old age. The first worker could accumulate far more in his account simply because the compounding of his returns would kick in earlier.

It is not that these kinds of disparities would represent something new in American life. Private pensions work this way—shrewd and fortunate investors end up with enough to buy a powerboat; foolish or unlucky ones wind up gleaning the early-bird special at Denny's. Social Security, however, has always been different from this. It was designed as a buffer against the vagaries of the market—again, it was a form of *insurance.* Privatizing Social Security would turn it into just another kind of private pension.

Indeed, for conservatives, this is precisely the point. "Under a privatized Social Security system, workers would have full property rights in their retirement accounts," writes Michael Tanner, who has led the privatization crusade from his perch at the libertarian Cato Institute. "They would own the money in them, the same way people own their IRAs or 401(k) plans." Tanner's analogy to IRAs is revealing. These were originally designed solely to provide for retirement, but, in the short time they have existed, Congress and the president have allowed them to be spent on an ever-growing number of needs, like home purchases, medical expenses, and tuition. The same thing would no doubt happen with individual Social Security accounts. And why not? If it's your own account, the government has scant justification to force you to save it if you prefer to spend it. Once Social Security is converted into an individual-account-based system, it is almost inevitable that the individual accounts will become private property. Once you take this final step—and it is the easiest and most logical one—then there is no difference between privatizing Social Security and simply abolishing it.

For these reasons, in part, very few national figures endorse total privatization. Instead most Republicans, and no small number of Democrats, have endorsed "partial privatization." This involves keeping the current system, perhaps in scaled-down form, and creating new individual accounts to go with it. This two-tiered system strikes people as such a reasonable compromise that nearly everyone in the know assumes that some version of it will ultimately be passed into law.

But such a compromise might turn out to be little more than a short-lived transition to full privatization. The reason lies in the fact that your Social Security taxes do not all go toward your own retirement. While future Social Security benefits will have to be cut, today's retirees will continue to enjoy full benefits—meaning that a portion of your payroll taxes will have to support them, no matter what. Another part of your payroll taxes goes toward benefits for disabled workers, who get far more out of the system than they put in because their tax-paying days were cut short by injury. (Of course, if you turn out to be a disabled worker yourself, this part of it is a good deal.) And, if you earn a lot of money, another chunk of your Social Security taxes subsidizes lower-earning workers.

So Social Security has many burdens to bear, and none of the partial privatization schemes would change this. If you add on individual accounts, then each Amer-

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ican would have two things: first, a regular Social Security account, parts of which are being siphoned off to current retirees, the disabled, and low earners; and second, an individual account, the benefits of which accrue solely to you. Can there be any doubt as to what would happen next? People would look at their two accounts—one of which was being sucked away to help complete strangers, the other of which was nicely compounding into a nest egg—and demand that Congress reduce the public account and increase the private one. The social insurance component would dwindle away into a withered rump or disappear altogether. Partial privatization is the thin end of a wedge.

The appeal of this to conservatives is clear enough. If you believe that individuals should provide for their own retirements and insure themselves against misfortune, then partial privatization is good, and full privatization is even better. But the advocates of privatization have not presented this argument to the public—because, in all likelihood, the public wouldn't buy it. So, rather than promote their plan on ideological grounds, they have made a different claim: privatization is a way to save Social Security. They have turned a moral question into a technical issue. And, since it is indeed true that changes are necessary to save Social Security, this has cast the matter in an exceedingly positive light. The business lobbies and conservative think tanks pushing for privatization, who organized long before their opponents and have lots of money to spend, so far have had their way in framing the issue. Newspaper and magazine reporters, who generally do not have the time to immerse themselves in the policy details, portray privatizers as bold reformers willing to make tough decisions and their opponents as apologists for the status quo.

But all of this obscures a simple fact: privatization has nothing whatsoever to do with saving Social Security. It is possible to save Social Security *and* to partially privatize it, but it is not possible to save Social Security *by* partially privatizing it. The two questions are utterly separate.

Privatization advocates have so thoroughly confused the issue that we have forgotten that Social Security's financial problem is extremely simple. The problem with Social Security is that, at some point in the future, projections show it will be paying out more in benefits than it can collect in taxes. Saving the program, then, means either spending less or taking in more—and privatization is not necessarily germane to that fact.

Consider the three known methods of partial privatization. The first would keep the current system and add private accounts on top. House Republicans like Newt Gingrich and John Kasich favor this approach. They would fund the new accounts out of projected budget surpluses, although this could also be done through a tax hike. Regardless of which method they choose, the bottom line is the same: setting up a completely separate new system would not save the current system from insolvency. You'd still have to find another way to spend less or take in more money.

The second scheme would reduce the Social Security tax by some amount and devote that money to private accounts. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has proposed this. The trouble is that, by diverting part of the Social Security tax to private accounts, it would make the problem *worse*, by denying revenue to regular Social Security. Moynihan's solution is to cut benefits enough to pay for the individual accounts *and* to keep Social Security solvent. So his plan would save Social Security and partially privatize it, but only by introducing far larger cuts than would be necessary if he didn't privatize it in the first place.

The final proposal is an innovative idea put forth by economist Martin Feldstein, a Harvard professor and former Reagan adviser. Feldstein's plan would use the budget surplus to give each worker a tax-free individual account. Then, for every dollar the account earns, the government would reduce the worker's regular Social Security payments by 75 cents. The individual accounts, in other words, would replace Social Security payments, which would save the government money. The genius of this plan is that nobody would lose a cent of benefits. Even if your individual account went broke, your Social Security checks would stay the same. Unsurprisingly, this same feature has made the Feldstein plan wildly popular on Capitol Hill.

But, like most free-lunch plans, this one has its drawbacks. First of all, even with heroically optimistic assumptions, it wouldn't save enough money to keep Social Security solvent. Second, it would finance the individual accounts with the budget surplus, but those surpluses are predicted to run out in about 20 years. Feldstein says that's not a problem because his plan would massively boost economic growth, thus creating future budget surpluses solving everything. But, if Feldstein's rosy scenario failed to materialize—and Reaganites have been known to get these things wrong from time to time—Social Security would have a huge financing gap requiring major tax increases or spending cuts. This isn't a solution to Social Security's problem—*it is* Social Security's problem.

Faulty though they may be, all the privatization schemes share a common selling point that contains a nugget of truth. In the long run, investing in the stock market offers a high rate of return and the potential for vast wealth. Currently, the government invests the Social Security trust fund in low-yield Treasury bills. The attraction of individual accounts is that they would harness those high rates of return in the private market.

But this still is not a reason to support individual accounts. The government could just as well take part of the trust fund and invest it in private equities in one lump sum. The higher returns would boost the fund's income but would do so more efficiently than a system of individual accounts, on which investment managers would take commissions. (According to some projections, commissions on accounts could eat up 20 percent of their value.) And, of course, such an arrangement

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would also eliminate the risk of dissolving the Social Security system.

For privatization advocates, of course, that defeats the whole purpose. So naturally they consider investing the trust fund in equities to be anathema. Feldstein, who proposed just such a scheme in 1975, now attacks it as incipient socialism. Congressional Republicans have preemptively ruled it out: giving the federal government a piece of corporate America, they say, could lead to all sorts of political abuses, such as government using its leverage to punish tobacco firms.

Yet, while such fears have an intuitive appeal, it's possible to invest a portion of the trust fund in such a way as to assuage the fears of even the most fretful market purist. As Brookings scholars Henry Aaron and Robert Reischauer have proposed in their outstanding new book on Social Security, the government could establish an independent board, modeled after the Federal Reserve, to handle the investing. To ensure its political autonomy, the board would appoint governors who would serve long, staggered terms. They would hire private equity managers on a competitive basis, and they would invest only in passive index funds and forfeit all voting rights on their shares. If future Congresses wanted to meddle with private enterprise, there's no reason why they'd try to do it by penetrating all those safeguards when they have at their disposal the far more powerful levers of taxes and regulation.

If these multiple firewalls appear inadequate, think about how the Federal Reserve works. With its vast power over the fortunes of presidents and corporations, its potential for corruption and political influence dwarfs that of a board charged with investing part of Social Security's reserves. Yet, despite the temptations, the Fed has remained free of any whiff of financial chicanery. Privatizers have no answer to Aaron and Reischauer's plan beyond the inchoate suspicion that it must somehow fail. And in fact they want it to fail. If there is another, more efficient way to capture the stock market's high returns for Social Security without private accounts, then privatization advocates will have lost their best argument and will be forced to make their case on explicitly ideological—that is, libertarian—grounds.

As things stand now, though, they won't have to make that argument, because President Clinton won't force the issue. This is an unusual circumstance, since Democrats have—as a birthright of sorts—an automatic advantage in any dispute over Social Security. This time Republicans hold the cards. Clinton has yearned openly to make Social Security reform the signature issue of his legacy. In order to entice distrustful Republicans to make a deal, he has gone to elaborate lengths in avoiding any criticism of their proposals. Even Clinton's economic advisers studiously avoid betraying any hint of what variety of outcome they might prefer.

Clinton has even declared that he would rather use market returns to shore up Social Security than to cut benefits. That is, he endorsed either some version of the Aaron-Reischauer plan or individual accounts. Clinton said he didn't care which—an odd subject on which to have no opinion, since it is the essential determinant of Social Security's fate. Since the Republicans *do* have a preference, this means that, before negotiations have even begun, the White House has tacitly acceded to partial privatization.

That is a remarkable philosophical concession, even for Clinton. But what does this mean? The outlines of the conventional interpretation have already begun to take shape. It will go something like this: Clinton can either demagogue the Republicans and refuse to allow individual accounts, or he can cast aside his party's hidebound liberal wing and make the bold, tough choices necessary to save Social Security.

At first blush, this analysis seems to make sense because, for most of recent history, liberal Democrats were indeed reluctant to confront Social Security's impending solvency problem. Knowing that the program is popular, liberal Democrats have been slow to acknowledge that it needs reform in order to survive—and they have been quick to attack Republicans who have recognized this reality, even those who did so in the hopes of fixing the system without destroying it. This dynamic dominated the issue for so long that it has been burned into the Beltway's consciousness.

Yet now we have something that is almost the complete opposite. Privatization—with its promise of untold riches for all—has made conventional Social Security reform seem drab and depressing. Privatization advocates have discovered that their most effective political argument is to promise that nobody will be hurt at all. When a coalition of liberal groups criticized individual accounts, the Cato Institute issued a statement saying, "The most appropriate name for this group would be 'The Castor Oil Coalition.'" Now that the right has turned to selling snake oil, it has turned around and accused the left of pushing castor oil.

Meanwhile, the traditional center-right position of shoring up the trust fund by trimming benefits without raising taxes finds itself well to the left of center. The plan Aaron and Reischauer champion, which just five years ago would have been far too conservative to pass Congress, is now probably too liberal for the Democratic White House. The most sensible solution has gone from unthinkably drastic to unthinkably tepid.

When President Roosevelt first introduced Social Security, conservatives assailed it as errant Bolshevism. And, at the time, there was indeed something radical about the idea that the federal government would take responsibility for keeping the old and the disabled out of poverty, spreading risk across the income spectrum and across generations. Soon, however, the notion gained widespread acceptance, as society came to believe that the best free market system has enclaves here and there in which fortune, skill, and inherited advantage play no part. What was at stake in 1935 is the same idea that is at stake again now, only, instead of contesting it, its opponents are simply assuming it away. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Hello from Hollywood

The time capsule will be chock full. If such a capsule is arranged in the year 2000 to be opened a century later, and if it includes a fair sampling of films that reflect the moral climate of our time, it's going to be crowded. American films about American morals have been plentiful from the beginning, but as the century ends, the graph line is climbing. Just in recent months we've had *Happiness* and *Your Friends and Neighbors* and *Very Bad Things* and *Bad Manners*, among others. Now there's **Hurlyburly** (Fine Line).

If it's argued that these films reflect only a small portion of the population—about as un-Heartland as one could get—it can be countered that this is the way that our time thinks of itself, or at least is tacitly eager to be shocked at itself. Some scholars have argued that Restoration comedy did not truly represent Restoration society; nonetheless, this was at least the theater that the society of the time relished. American morality today is of course much more varied than the films above indicate, but that's not the most important point. These films in themselves, quite apart from the question of their verity, are manifests of what filmmakers have seen in one segment of society and what they believe will interest generally. Audiences may be shocked or secretly envious or blasé or even not quite convinced, but the sheer acceptance of these films (and they certainly are accepted) weaves them into the texture of our time.

Hurlyburly, the David Rabe play that was done successfully in several theaters, has been adapted by Rabe himself for the screen, with some opening-up of locale and some thematic emphasis. Most of the picture takes place in the Hollywood Hills house that is shared by two casting agents, Eddie and Mickey. They live fast-lane lives, particularly Eddie; their friends and their women are items along the freeway. The women in particular are mere items. Eddie, divorced, is a coke-head, though only in greater degree than the others. All these people, consciously or not, spend most of their time re-arranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*. Says Mickey: "We're all going under, so how about a little laugh along the way?" Lest the film audience should be left wondering about the reasons for this nonchalant despair, Rabe introduces what he could do only skimpily in the theater: TV clips of the stupidities and horrors and cruelties of our time. (TV has replaced the telephone as the screenwriter's most essential prop.) These clips make cause-and-effect a bit heavy and pat—the cause was suggested vividly enough in the play—but in any case all of Rabe's characters are presented as products of the Zeitgeist, aware of it or not.

Nothing happens in this film. It was true of the play as well, but the film makes it even more evident. This fact, too, is part of the Zeitgeist: the author's disregard of traditional structure parallels the characters' disregard of traditional values. Incidents occur, both trivial ones and serious ones trivially regarded, but there is no central dramatic action. The film—again like the play—is not about climactic events in Eddie's or Mickey's life: it's principally about the way they live, as laid-back as possible without being laid out. Drugs and sex, quarrels and pathos provide topics of conversation, not much more.

Clearly such a mode demands interesting conversation, and Rabe generally makes good. But the film outstays its welcome. The last section, a sort of coda between Eddie and a girl who returns after a long absence, is attenuated. It feels as if Rabe knows he has struck the richest vein of his writing life—this play/film is his best work that I know—and is reluctant to let it go because he may never get another as rich. Also, attractively inflated though the language is, Rabe dishes out the rhetoric too impartially. Most of the characters speak alike. It's all very well for Eddie to say: "We have just verified, and I mean scientifically, the bitch has been proven to basically hate all men. She doesn't need to hate me in particular—she already hates me in the fucking abstract." Eddie is apparently a somewhat cultivated man. But the roughest character in the film says things like "Hey, if I have overstepped some invisible boundary here, you notify me fast because I respond quickly to clear-cut information while, you know, murk and innuendo make me totally demented." And there's more like that.

One member of the cast was a poor choice. Gary Shandling, a popular TV comic, plays Artie, a friend. (Artie drops in with a 16-year-old girl, Donna, who has

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dancing at Lughnasa. *Five Irish sisters, Meryl Streep prime among them, in 1936, struggling to behave themselves and almost succeeding. A bit distended but finely done. (Reviewed 11/30/98)* **Hilary and Jackie.** *Based on fact. Two sisters—one of them the cellist Jacqueline Du Pré, who died young—their eccentricities, their loves, their love for each other. Imaginative, affecting. (12/21/98)* **Shakespeare in Love.** *Fast, funny fiction. The young William S. writes* Romeo and Juliet *while involved in a comparable romance. Joseph Fiennes flames as Will, Gwyneth Paltrow quite surprisingly charms as his beloved. Swirling Elizabethan ambiance. (1/4&11/99)* **Very Bad Things.** *Californian yuppies make a bad decision about a stripper's death and start down a moral toboggan slide. Wobbly script, intense ensemble acting. (12/14/98)*—**SK**

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been living with him for a while. "You want her?" he asks Mickey, and leaves her in the house "like a CARE package.") Shandling has occasionally appeared as an actor but, so far, only appears to be one. Anna Paquin, who made her debut at nine in *The Piano*, does well enough as Donna, a bland, homeless, amoral waif. Robin Wright Penn is haunting once again as a troubled girlfriend of Eddie's, Meg Ryan is painfully cheerful as a hooker accustomed to abuse.

The three principal men shine. In a sense, two of them succeeded before the shooting started. Chazz Palminteri, the rough friend, apparently just needs to show up in order to be forceful, commanding. Kevin Spacey, as Mickey, is a much more skilled actor, but he, too, has become a presence who wins just by being there. We *want* to like Spacey as soon as he appears. Spacey, we should note, had a headstart on the role: he understudied Mickey in the New York production of the play in 1984.

Sean Penn, too, had a headstart. He played Eddie in a California production that was directed by Rabe in 1988, and he keeps going here. Eddie is not the pivotal character in any structural sense, but it is the biggest part and Penn has its measure. It's easy enough for an actor to simulate the progressive effects of coke-sniffing; Penn makes the coke-sniffing man a kind of fugitive—impatient, pathetic up to a point, quietly panicked. Penn showed talent as a writer-director in *The Indian Runner*, and he has consistently been a feral actor. Pessimistic as one may be about the film world, it's hard not to hope high for him.

Anthony Drazan's direction presumably reflects the advice of Rabe, who tells us, in the published play, that his own production differed from the first one (by Mike Nichols). In any case, Drazan makes the film seem fairly hot news from the front of lush, sterile living. He is greatly helped by Dylan Tichenor, the responsive editor. Together with the smoothly meshed cast, they give *Hurlyburly* its ultimate reason for being, its basic tone: wry dissolution. •

The Fire of Great Designs

By Fouad Ajami

A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton by Mary S. Lovell

(Norton, 910 pp., $39.95)

I.

The biographers never seem to weary of Captain Sir Richard Burton. The hunt for the meaning of this man's riddle began when the explorer and writer and *enfant terrible* of the Victorian age was still around. The first book about Burton appeared in 1880, a decade before his death; and since then the books have kept coming. Mary S. Lovell's volume is the latest and the longest of the lot. Meticulously researched, it overwhelms the other accounts and it has a fuller treatment of his wife Isabel than anything attempted in earlier books.

This amazing ability to ensnare: it is what Richard Burton must have intended. He led a frantic life, he was so many contradictory things all at once: consul and gunboat diplomatist for the empire; "Ruffian Dick," the "White Nigger" who offended the sensibilities of his age; the translator of the *Lusiads*, Portugal's sixteenth-century epic, and translator also of the *Arabian Nights*, and the purveyor of the pornography of India; the explorer of the sources of the White Nile, and the daring man who disguised himself as a native Muslim and made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina—and the man who wanted it known that he had nothing but disdain for the Sindhis, the Jews, the Beloochis, the Welsh, and all the other "semi-barbarous races."

Burton yearned for the "swirl of native life," but he rarely found contentment in distant parts. His wanderlust took him to Africa and Damascus, to Brazil and India, to Salt Lake City to study the Mormons, to Iceland for a survey of its sulphur mines. But no place really held him; the pace precluded any kind of intimacy. He wrote sixty books and he spoke twenty-nine languages. He could not genuinely meditate on any place, or be taken in by any culture.

In the legend of Burton, we would have known more of the man, he would

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have shocked us more, we would have had the solution to the puzzle, had it not been for the sacrilege committed by his widow. She locked herself up after his death and in a "mad fit of wantonness" burned his personal papers and unfinished erotic manuscripts and diaries. According to the legend, the burning of the papers took sixteen days. Lady Burton was prudish and sensitive, it was said, and she had succumbed to the moral strictures of the time. But Lovell, a relentless researcher, who has unearthed all possible surviving evidence of the Burtons, puts this legend to rest.

Isabel the dutiful wife had worked alone, it is true, going through her husband's papers, but she did then what she had done all along: she looked after her husband's affairs, she sorted and packed his manuscripts. "Pay, Pack, and Follow," had been the standard message that Burton left his wife on endless occasions as they wandered the world, on one consular assignment after the other. And this obituary occasion was no exception. What she burned in her moment of wantonness was a work of translation that Burton had nearly finished before his death, of a work called *The Scented Garden.*

This work, based on an ancient, erotic Arabic manuscript entitled *Al Raud al atir wa nuzhat al Khatir,* had been discovered in Algeria by a French army officer in 1850. It had been translated into French in 1876, and the French version, *Le Jardin Parfumé,* had been rendered into English by Burton himself in 1886, under the title *The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui.* The French version had been heavily sanitized; a whole long chapter had been left out, and Burton was anxious to locate the original manuscript, with the intention of publishing it under a new title, *The Scented Garden.* The search took him to Algiers, but he came away empty-handed; there were only abridgments and decaying copies of the work to be found.

So the effort came to grief, and Isabel Burton fed to the flames only the abortive result of that endeavor. But already in his lifetime Burton had become contested property, and the lines had been drawn between opponents of erotic literature and a small band of free thinkers who took Burton as one of their own. In this way the legend was born that the work that Isabel denied to posterity had been the defining work of his career.

A century later, this Victorian feud can be left to the Burton cultists. For we have all the paper trail we can handle of Richard Burton. He wrote about everything under the sun: zoology and sex, Hindu devilry and the Lake Regions of Central Africa, falconry in the Indus, bayonet exercise, the highlands of Brazil and Etruscan Bologna. He penetrated into Mecca and Medina, and into the forbidden city of Harar in the Somaliland. *The Scented Garden* would not have rounded out his life: he had already scandalized his contemporaries with detailed treatments of pederasty, and another translation of exotic doings in distant parts would have done nothing to change his place in his world.

Burton promised a full autobiography, but he must have known better than to attempt anything more than chronicles of his wanderings. He was not an introspective man and he was not particularly profound. Born in 1821, at the peak of empire, he died in Trieste, his last consular posting, in 1890, before the imperial edifice cracked. Thus he was spared the pain of imperial decline, and the knowledge that came with that quality of pain.

It is fitting that the man who affected the swagger of empire, who had once dismissed the people of Sindh for being as lazy and ungrateful as the Irish, was half-Irish himself. It was in the nature of the thing for this man, who had tried everything to get England's attention, that his formative years had been spent on the Continent. His "otherness," his unease with the order of Victorian England that would torment him throughout his life, was owed to his family's circumstances.

In the year prior to Richard Burton's birth, his father Joseph, an army captain who had commanded a small British garrison at Genoa, had been dismissed from active service and placed on half-pay. Luck and the politics of the monarchy sealed Joseph Burton's fate: the new monarch, George IV, who ascended to the throne that same year, was eager to obtain a divorce from his discarded wife Caroline. In her earlier wanderings, Caroline had spent time in Genoa; she was something of an exhibitionist, and her behavior there had become a matter of contention during the divorce proceedings. And it was Captain Joseph Netterville Burton who was called to provide evidence against the Queen, and was ordered to do so by the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wellington. He "flatly refused," Burton wrote of his father with evident pride, and this led to his dismissal.

In the aftermath of this fiasco, Burton's parents made their way to the heart of France, to the town of Tours, by the Loire. This was to be the first of a series of moves that would lead them, for extended periods of time, to set up house in Pisa, Naples, Marseilles, and Pau. This life on the road marked the two Burton boys, Richard and his younger brother Edward. By the time their father sent them back to England—Richard to Oxford, Edward to Cambridge—the die was cast. They were strangers in their own country, they hated the dreary climate and the food and the weather and the decorum of it all. In Lovell's words, "Richard had missed out on a vital part of formal English education: the ethos of play-up-and-play-the-game; submission to the system—even those unpleasant customs such as 'fagging' and 'bumping'; give and take; take your punishment like a good chap and maintain—especially in extremis—a stiff upper lip. Experience of these customs made one part of the establishment club."

The young man dispatched to Oxford for a future career in the Church was in due course "sent down," that is, expelled, from the university before finishing his degree. He was at loose ends and restless for an adventure. And so he chose a path available to young men of his class: service in the East India Company's Army, where he was commissioned as an ensign. His brother Edward would follow the same course: dismissal from Cambridge, and an Army posting in Ceylon.

Aboard the ship that took him on a four-month journey to Bombay, the young ensign spent the bulk of his time working up Hindustani with the Indian crew members. The life among strangers, the life among foreign languages, had begun. And there began, too, the pattern that would grow all too familiar in the years to come: the wonder of encountering distant places of the imagination giving way to the disappointment with squalid conditions.

The first sight of "marvelously picturesque" Bombay was short-lived. The hotel was "an abomination," and its rooms were "loose boxes." Its teas and curries "haunted the sensorium of memory for the rest of man's natural life." He saw through and into the colonial society of the Raj: it was a middle-class society which had "lost its head accordingly," sons of small traders back home now "ruling districts, and commanding Regiments, riding in carriages ... and earning more in a month than their parents earned in a year." Burton learned in a hurry the social stratification of this world, that the Company's Army was inferior to The Queen's Army, its officers mainly men of the lower middle class.

He had time to spare, and ambition. Some were vain, he said, to want more than what such a colonial existence offered, "and of these fools was I." He

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poured his energy into mastering the languages of India, and eagerly set out from Bombay—a creature of the colonial presence—to Gujarat, in Western India, for his first posting in the walled city of Baroda. He did the subaltern's work drilling his sepoys. He partook of the sexual prerogatives of the Raj, taking up with a *bubu*, a native mistress, the first of several Indian women with whom he lived. The moral code of the empire was beginning to shift: the "Oriental" phase which looked with indulgence on the liberties of empire was yielding to a stricter morality, but the new code was not Burton's. His *bubu*, he said, was a "walking dictionary" who taught not only "Hindustani grammar," but "whole syntaxes of native life" as well.

The tendency, really the need, to shock his kind announced itself early in the life of the young officer. There were whole worlds in India, and he relished them. The preceding year, Sir Charles Napier had conquered the great province of Sindh—an apocryphal Victorian tale maintained that Napier had sent a punning one-word report of his triumph: "Peccavi," or "I have sinned"—and an assignment that took Burton to Sindh was to take him deeper into Indian life, and to supply him the material for two of his earliest books, *Scinde or, The Unhappy Valley* (1851) and *Sindh, and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (1851). It was also during this phase, thanks to an interlude in Goa, that the young Burton, still in his mid-twenties, took up a lifelong interest in the sixteenth-century Portuguese poet Luis Vaz de Camoens, whose epic poem he would translate into English in his later years.

The branding sin, in imperial eyes, was the sin of "going native," the sin of "letting the side down" by slipping into native worlds. Dominion required separation, an awareness of destiny and race; but this young subaltern hastened to cross that great divide. He knew the languages of the east—he was adding languages and dialects by the month—and he even had the features of the east. Lovell writes that he was exotic to behold, gypsy-looking, swarthy, with high cheekbones, dark eyes, dark hair, dark moustache. Thus his appearance, too, was a part of his separateness in his world, and an invitation to push deeper into the other world.

Burton could claim that he was doing all this to gather intelligence; there was a tradition of adventurous officers, good linguists, penetrating the outer borders of British India, and of Central Asia, too, to report on the Russians or on native unrest. It was in 1845 that Burton's first disguise, Mirza Abdullah the Bushiri, came into being. He took the identity of a half-Arab, half-Persian traveller and trader, from Bushire in the Persian Gulf. To serve the empire and to flee its restraints: the disguise of Mirza Abdullah was double-edged, and served both dimensions of his double life. He travelled for adventure and play-acting and hedonism, and he travelled for the empire.

He wrote of this new personage, Mirza Abdullah, in the third person, in his book *Falconry in the Valley of the Indus* (1852). "When the Mirza arrived in a strange town, his first step was to secure a house in or near a bazaar for the purpose of evening conversazioni. Now and then he rented a shop.... I believe the polite Mirza was in the habit of giving the heaviest possible weight for their money to all the ladies, particularly the pretty ones." Sindh was a newly occupied country; it had not yet taken to colonial rule, and was not broken. Thus the intelligence that Burton gathered was of no small value to his superiors, particularly to Napier himself. A thoroughly popular commander with his subordinates, the conqueror of Sindh had an appetite for gossip; he had tried and failed to learn Hindustani; and he was something of a hot-head himself. He was, in other words, just the sort of man

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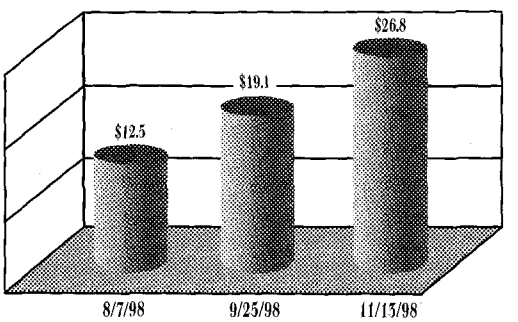

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to be charmed by the young ensign on his staff.

Burton had mastered Sindhi; but it was an assignment by Napier that did more than anything else to tarnish Burton's reputation. On a whim, Napier ordered a report on three brothels near a military camp in Karachi, which provided boys and eunuchs for its customers, and he gave the assignment to Burton. Napier may have wanted to make sure that none of his men was involved in the bordellos; but he got more than he bargained for. He received a thoroughly detailed report from Burton, whose assignment had required him to pass "many an evening," he later wrote, "obtaining the fullest details which were dispatched to Government House." Napier kept the report on male brothels confidential, but the report leaked after Napier's departure from India. A civilian successor who took up Napier's duty was horrified by what he read, and recommended Burton's dismissal from the Army.

Burton was not dismissed, but he was a marked man thereafter. He came to the sub-continent in 1842 and he departed seven years later, at the age of 28. This pattern—the chafing at the limits of official tolerance, the need for a sinecure, the fury at that kind of dependence—was to stay with him. India tested him, called up his talents, gave him the taste for alien ways, taught him the habit of turning his notes and diaries into books, into which he poured all that he learned among the exhilarating strangers. In 1851 and 1852, no less than four of Burton's books were published, on Sindh and Goa, and on falconry in the valley of Indus.

The disguise of Mirza Abdullah prepared Burton for the act of daring that secured his fame: the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in 1853. He was to go to Arabia, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society: it was his luck that his wanderlust was in so many ways the wanderlust of a nation eager to explore and to possess the world. Exploration was a national mania at the time. The Royal Geographical Society, established in 1830, was a great force in the country at mid-century. Its patrons were the elite of the realm. A young man on leave from the East India Company (and one with a slightly tarnished reputation) could easily find patrons for so audacious a voyage.

Burton learned that a fund of 200 pounds had been set aside for an Arabian exploration, and he proposed a journey of discovery that would remove "that opprobrium to modern adventure, the huge white blot which in our map still notes the Eastern and Central regions of Arabia." There was a good measure of dissimulation in his proposal: the Royal Geographical Society was informed, in a fashion, of his intention to visit Mecca and Medina, but his employers at the East India Company were not. Such an expedition would not have appealed to the directors of the Company. The directors would have been eager not to offend Muslim sensibilities, and not to place one of their employees in physical danger in case of exposure in Islam's holy cities. And so Burton fudged things, assuring the directors of the Company that his disguise as a "petty trader and physician" would be good enough "even in the midst of Mecca."

Courtesy W. W. Norton

RICHARD BURTON DISGUISED AS "MIRZA ABDULLAH," c. 1849

It was in the interlude between India and his journey to Arabia that he met the woman, ten years his junior, whom he was to wed a decade later. Isabel Arundell hailed from an aristocratic background; her family traced its ancestry back to the days of William the Conqueror. The Arundells were England's pre-eminent Catholic family. A chance meeting in a French resort town decided the matter for Isabel: she was suddenly in love, and she would wait for the adventurer to return.

Isabel Arundell was a romantic in her own right. Her mother had given her a copy of Disraeli's *Tancred*, the great colonial-romantic novel of the time, and Isabel dreamed of excitements in faraway lands. It was a "night of nights," she was to say of the first evening that she spent in Burton's company. They had waltzed that evening, and "I left my sash where he put his arm around my waist, and my gloves, which his hands had clasped. I never wore them again." She yearned for a "wild, roving, vagabond life," and she met the man who could give it to her, the man who was Victorian England's greatest gypsy. "I am a spoilt twin and she is the missing fragment," Burton once wrote of her. Isabel would become his advocate in government circles, his literary agent, the keeper of his flame. Yet she who dreamed of wandering and adventure knew also how to "understand" that there were other adventures to be had before the married life, that first he would make his great journeys to Arabia and undertake his search for the sources of the White Nile in the lake regions of Central Africa.

Burton was not the first Western explorer and scholar to make his way to Mecca and Medina. A celebrated German Orientalist named John Ludwig Burkhardt made the journey in 1814-15, and wrote of it in rich detail. But this would be a passage for England, and for the Royal Geographical Society, and for Burton. In the Burton way, the adventure was given imperial purposes: he would explore the possibilities of Arabian stud horses for the Indian market, and he would study the hydrography of the

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Hijaz, and he would ponder the racial characteristics of the Arabian Peninsula. But he was headed in the direction of the holy cities, and it was the Burton way to venture where others had not.

His enterprise owed something, also, to his curiosity about Islam. He was himself an agnostic, and something in Islam's philosophical aversion to extravagant myth and ritual appealed to him. Burton was ecletic and undogmatic in religious matters: "Personally, I ignore the existence of soul and spirit, feeling no want of a self within a self, an I within an I," he once proclaimed. He was intrigued by Sufism. He once found relief for his "nerves with a course on Sikh religion and literature." He was given to praising Islam as the "only practical ethical religion" that was nearly "free from the two great demoralizing elements—dogma and priestcraft." He certainly did not enter the cradle of Islam as a Christian believer eager to debunk the rival monotheistic faith. He went as an adventurer and a spectator and a writer. It was not a frivolous passage. For reasons of safety, indeed, Burton had himself circumcised, so that he could travel and partake of the pilgrimage unmolested.

The pilgrimages were huge international affairs. One vast stream started in Constantinople and journeyed through Damascus on its way to Medina; the other was the Egyptian caravan. It was the latter procession that Burton joined. He travelled as a Pathan born in India of Afghan parents and educated in Rangoon. He passed up the opportunity of traveling as a Western convert to Islam, because "the convert is always watched . . . and men do not willingly give information to a 'new Moslem,' especially a Frank; they suspect his conversion to be forced, look upon him as a spy, and let him see as little in life as possible."

It took no small measure of physical hardiness to make the journey. On camelback he made the trip from Cairo to Suez, then crossed by ship to the port city of Yambu on the Red Sea. The trek to Medina was a hazardous venture through bandit-infested territory; a local bedu chieftain at odds with the Sharif of Mecca had vowed to "cut the throat of every hen venturing into his passes." In the dreaded Pilgrim's Pass, the procession was attacked, and twelve of the pilgrims were killed. But Burton made it; and his diary captures the thrill of arrival in Medina with its orchards and gardens after the hazardous journey. "It was like a vision in the *Arabian Nights*. . . . We halted our camels as if by word of command. All dismounted, in imitation of the pious of old, and sat down, jaded and

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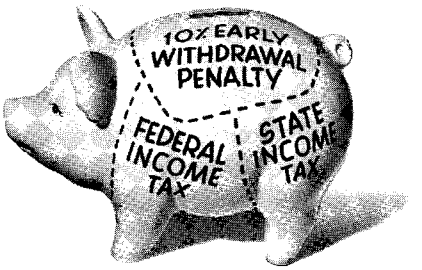

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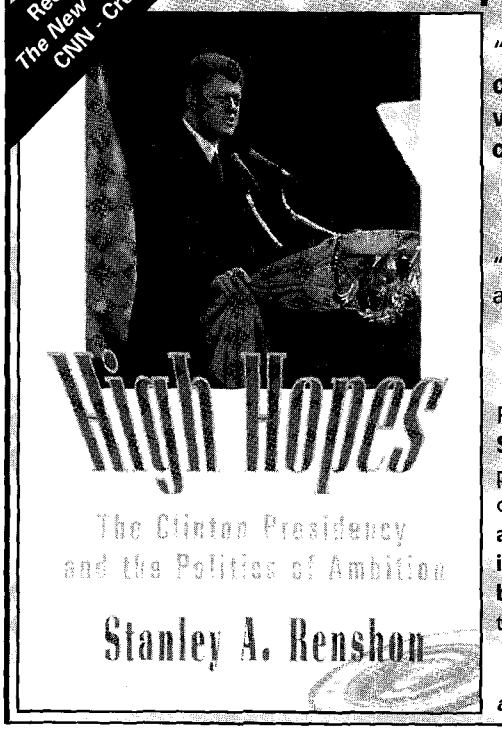

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hungry as we were, to feast our eyes."

He spent a month in Medina, where he visited the site of the Prophet's tomb, and took notes and made surreptitious sketches. (He was addicted to risk.) He remained in Medina awaiting the great Damascus caravan on its way to Mecca. And he made that leg of the journey on August 31, 1853. "To judge by the eye," he wrote of his caravan to Mecca,

> the host was composed of at least seven thousand souls, on foot, on horseback, in litters, or bestriding the splendid camels of Syria. The lowest hobbled with heavy staves. Then came the riders of asses, of camels, and of mules. Respectable men, especially Arabs, were mounted on dromedaries, and the soldiers had horses: a led animal was saddled for every grandee, ready whenever he might wish to leave his litter. Women, children, and invalids of the poorer classes sat upon a "*Haml Mussattah*"—rugs and cloths spread over the two large boxes which form the camel's load.... Not the least beauty of the spectacle was its wondrous variety of detail; no man was dressed like his neighbour, no camel was caparisoned, no horse was clothed in uniform, as it were. And nothing stranger than the contrasts....

Burton's writing was always true to the particulars of place and ethnology and manners, but it rarely revealed his own inner world. Still, his excitement is unmistakable in his first encounter with the *haram*, the Grand Mosque of Mecca.

> There it lay, the bourn of my long and weary Pilgrimage, realising the plans and hopes of many a year. The mirage medium of Fancy invested the huge catafalque and its gloomy pall with peculiar charms. There were no giant fragments of hoar antiquity as in Egypt, no remains of graceful and harmonious beauty as in Greece and Italy, no barbarous gorgeousness as in the buildings of India; yet the view was strange, unique—and how few have looked upon the celebrated shrine! I may truly say that, of all the worshippers who clung weeping to the curtain, or who pressed their beating hearts to the stone, none felt for the moment a deeper emotion than did the Haji from the far-north. It was as if the poetical legends of the Arab spoke truth, and that the waving wings of angels, not the sweet breeze of morning, were agitating and swelling the black covering of the shrine. But, to confess humbling truth, theirs was the high feeling of religious enthusiasm, mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride.

He did not linger long in Mecca. After fulfilling the requirements of the pilgrimage, he was seized with an urge to leave the place. It was wise to quit after the rites, he observed in his chronicle, for "great emotions must be followed by a reaction," and a man struck by the awe of it all did not want to risk "the marvel waxing stale." And he grew careless, perhaps brazen, as he set out to leave. He booked first-class passage aboard a British steamer from Jeddah, something that would have been denied the Pathan traveller he claimed to be; and a young escort who had always suspected that Burton was an Englishman traveling in disguise remarked to Burton's servant, "Now I understood, your master is a sahib from India; he hath laughed at our beards."

II.

He came, he saw, he narrated. There was the record of the journey and there was the buzz back home. "Could you get my arrival in Egypt reported in some London papers. Just to warn my friends that travel is safe," he wrote from Cairo to a contact at the Royal Geographical Society. There was no respite in which the journey could not be reflected upon or savored: in the same letter he made a plea for the next expedition. "I hear that The Geographical has been speaking about an expedition to Zanzibar. *Dhak'ilak*, as the Arabs say —'I take refuge with you.' I shall strain every nerve to command it, or rather get the command—and if you will assist me I am a made man." It was always the next journey that would make him: this was the Burton curse.

Fresh from the Arabian Peninsula, Africa tugged at him, as it did at his patrons. On the pilgrimage in the desert he had heard of a "vast inland sea" in Central Africa, of "mountains of eternal snows sitting on the equator." The hunt for the sources of the White Nile—the unveiling of Isis, as Burton called it —became his great calling. The itinerary that he planned was the stuff of high adventure. He would set out from Aden to the forbidden city of Harar in the interior, then southward to Zanzibar before making the expedition westward to the lake regions.

Harar had a bad reputation, which it deserved; and this made it the perfect Burton challenge. Ten camel days away from the coast, it had a brutal, fanatical prince; and it possessed a legend of its own that its Golden Age would come to an end when foreigners and infidels made their appearance there. Burton arrived only to find Harar "a disappointment and a paltry prize." He spent ten days there, the last six of them petitioning the Prince of Harar to leave the city. (The premonition of Harar was on the mark: within a generation, the hitherto inaccessible place, peopled by coffee and tobacco and saffron producers and traders, would come under Egyptian occupation.)

Calamity struck the caravan early. In the coastal town of Berbera, Burton's camp was attacked by marauders. There had been rumors of a British expedition into the interior, reports that the British were determined to put an end to the slave trade, and Burton's expedition found itself in the middle of all that. Burton's surveyor and close companion, Lieutenant William Stroyan, was killed. Burton's assistant surveyor, John Hanning Speke, was wounded. A barbed spearhead entered Burton's left cheek, pierced the roof of his mouth, and exited through his right cheek.

In those imperial outposts, Burton had his enemies, soldiers and diplomats who resented his free-lance ways; and so he was "severely censured" for the episode at Berbera. He had to bide his time before permission to tackle the African interior was granted him. The successful publication in 1855 of his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*, a sprawling three-volume work, saw him through this difficult time.

Illustrated with Burton's fine sketches, *Personal Narrative* was a book of astounding detail and patience, the work of a man alert to everything around him—the men and the women encountered on the road, the physical world, the customs and the rituals, the climate, the traveler's tribulations. And strewn throughout were the trademark footnotes, hundreds of them, Burton's excursions into all the many matters that held him, all the curiosities that a reader back home might have wanted to know about that inaccessible world. The writer's pride was set out in an epigraph to the work that Burton took from Gibbon: "Our notions of Mecca must be drawn from the Arabians; as no unbeliever is permitted to enter the city, our travellers are silent." He had broken the silence.

But he was in Africa, and at the mercy of his publisher and his publisher's anxieties. The preface to the work recommended it to the "reading public" as a "welcome addition to our knowledge of these hitherto mysterious *penetralia* of Mohammedan superstition." Burton's publishers worried that his massive book would tax the reading public with his own *penetralia*, that the details and the anecdotes "may appear open to the charge of triviality"; but Burton insisted that they were an "essential part of the subject," an inalienable aspect of that inaccessible world of menace and "superstition."

When permission to go to Africa came, he made the big expedition with John Speke. But the chemistry was miserable. Speke was to become Burton's nemesis, and their rivalry over the

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sources of the Nile a matter that divided England's elite for the next decade. A prudish, provincial man, Speke was the son of a Somerset squire, with blue eyes and fair hair. He was prone to attacks of temporary blindness, but he was a good sportsman, fanatical about hunting and shooting. Other than a smattering of Hindustani, he had no knowledge of foreign languages and no interest in native peoples. He had no powers of observation, no interest in writing things down. Burton, by contrast, always packed the Bible, Shakespeare, and Euclid. In an earlier biography, Fawn Brodie observed about the two men that Burton was a sponge and Speke was a stone. So this was not a passage destined for harmony. "He had done practically nothing," Burton wrote of Speke in his diary. "Burton was always ill," Speke wrote in a letter back home.

This was a journey of harrowing difficulty, a caravan of some 130 bearers through present-day Tanzania, "then a creeper-strewn Eden, with few beaten tracks other than those made by animals hunting tribesmen or slave traders." They travelled through rain and mud, tsetse flies and mosquitoes. As Lovell writes:

> This was the world that Burton and Speke proposed to penetrate. Without maps. Without the comfort of guides who travelled the route before. Without any knowledge of what lay beyond the next range of hills, without even knowing whether they could communicate with the nomadic tribes they might meet along the way. Without any access to assistance, or communication of any kind.... And all this to reach a lake which might, or might not, be a myth.

It was fiery hot in the day and chilly at night. The porters rioted and were flogged. And always, it seemed, both white men were ill with fever and delirium. Arab slave traders turned up along the way: "I was always at home when I got amongst Arabs," Burton recorded. "They always treat me as practically one of themselves." It is easy to imagine the surliness of the other white man as Hajji Abdullah slipped into the world of the Arabs: "Here were the times when Jack was at a disadvantage from want of language; he could join in none of the things and this made him, I think, a little sour."

In an Arab settlement, some four months after their departure from the coast, a certain Snay bin Amir, an Arab who knew the geography of the interior, confirmed a suspicion of Burton's: that there were several lakes in the central region. Snay bin Amir had sailed across one of these lakes—it was Lake Tanganyika—but he spoke of another one to the north. This was where the great gamble was made, and the great feud began: Burton had wagered on Lake Tanganyika as the likely source of the Nile, and Speke, in a lucky guess, had chosen the northern lake—the one he would christen Lake Victoria Nyanza, the one that future explorations would confirm as the source of the White Nile. "In great glee I asked Snay through Captain Burton whether a river ran out of that lake," Speke was to claim in his own rendition of the events. Through Captain Burton: the skilled linguist and explorer, the older man who had brought Speke along as "assistant surveyor and collector of zoological specimens," had been reduced to the role of an interpreter. Speke was through with living in the shadow of his better.

Fortune had smiled upon John Speke: after coming upon Lake Tanganyika (a sight that Speke had missed due to one of his recurrent attacks of blindness), Burton had fallen ill and consented to a solitary journey by Speke in search of the northern waters. Burton stayed behind to recuperate, working on a lexicon of local dialects. Six weeks later, he woke to the sound of gunshots: it was Speke and his party. Shortly after breakfast, Speke announced that he had discovered the source of the river. "The fortunate discoverer's conviction was strong," Burton wrote. "His reasons were weak." Speke had not sailed on the lake, and he had not seen its south-east bank. Yet the Victoria Nyanza was his lake. It was he who discovered it.

The two men parted company in Aden after a sullen, unhappy return from their expedition. A physician there had refused to grant Burton a certificate for the passage on a steamer to London. There was another steamer scheduled to make the trip in a fortnight, but Speke had refused to wait. "I shall hurry up, Jack, as soon as I can," Burton told his companion. Speke was full of assurance: "Goodbye old fellow; you may be sure that I shall not go up to the Royal Geographical Society until you come to the fore and we appear together. Make your mind quite easy about that." But Speke did not wait: he contacted the sponsors on his first day back. By the time Burton arrived two weeks later, on the next steamer, Speke had claimed a brilliant discovery for himself and Burton had been reduced to the "sick colleague, struggling along in the valiant Speke's wake."

Burton's notes and geographical details, which appeared in 1860 in two volumes as *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, were astonishing. (Many years later another explorer, Verney Lovett Cameron, marched across Africa from east to west, with Burton's work in hand, and described the work as "verbal photographs," only better in their "minuteness and detail.") But Burton's literary accomplishment profited him nothing: he was losing the public relations campaign to Speke. The latter knew very little geography and he recorded very little of what he saw, but he had his confidence ("my lake," he called Nyanza) and he had his place in society, the squire's son, doing battle against a man of the interstices. Speke was not exactly subtle about Burton's "otherness." He remarked to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* that he would "die a hundred deaths" rather than have "a foreigner take from Britain the honor of the discovery."

Burton's career as an explorer was effectively over. He was reduced now to consular assignments in marginal places, while Speke was financed for another African expedition, and hailed for "solving one of geography's most persistent enigmas." Still, Speke had overreached; he had claimed too much, he had been too strident in his attacks on Burton. His paltry knowledge of geography began to tell, and other explorers and geographers, notably the legendary Dr. David Livingstone, rejected his claim that the Victoria Nyanza was indisputably the source of the Nile.

It all came to an end with its own cunning. Five years after the eruption of the great feud, a debate was arranged, by a scientific society, between Burton and Speke, in a spa town not far from Speke's family home. This was to be the decisive confrontation: each man would lay out his own case and question the other. But no debate took place. The day before the encounter was to begin, Speke was mortally wounded when his gun went off while he was shooting partridge in the fields near his home.

III.

"I wish I were a man. If I were I would be Richard Burton; but, being only a woman, I would be Richard Burton's wife," Isabel Arundell wrote in an appeal to her mother. He was of good birth, she added, "as good as we are," and as for religion, "he says there is nothing between Agnosticism and Catholicity." The marriage, which was delayed by Burton's wanderings, took place despite her mother's wishes. Isabel finally had her adventurer.

It was her tenacity and her social connections that made it possible for Burton to find a place in the consular service after he lost his army commission at the age of forty and was dismissed

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without a pension. She knew Lord John Russell, secretary of state for foreign affairs, who had given Burton his first consular appointment in West Africa, the "white man's grave." Seven years later, after stints in South America, Isabel secured her husband his dream appointment as consul in Damascus. She was relentless in her advocacy of his cause, and she knew the people who mattered. A Tory defeat in 1868, Disraeli's loss to Gladstone's Liberals, had proven a blessed event. One of the final acts of the departing foreign secretary was a gift to Isabel: the appointment to Damascus.

His Arabian dream was hers as well: she, too, was journeying to the landscape of *Tancred*, and wrote of her luck with wonder: "I had shaken the dust off my feet ... respectability—the harness of European society. My destination was Damascus, the dream of my childhood and girlhood. I am to live amongst Bedouin Arab chiefs; I shall smell the desert air; I shall have tents, horses, weapons, and be free...." But Damascus was a ticklish, difficult place in 1869-70.

For a start, Her Majesty's representatives in the field, and the old pros at the Foreign Office, did not look kindly upon Burton's posting to Damascus. The ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Sir Henry Elliot, a master player of the game, did not want such a swashbuckler anywhere near his eastern domain. Elliot was wary of "Eastern Travellers," and of Burton all the more. What these travellers did in "the wilds," he complained, could not be tolerated in delicate consular work. And Elliot had a partner in his steady campaign against Burton in Mohammed Rashid Pasah, the Ottoman *wali*, or provincial governor, of Damascus. A decade earlier, Christians had been massacred in the city, and the conscience of Europe had been briefly moved by those calamities. The Pasha, a cautious administrator, wanted peace in his domain, and the Burtons playing native in his jurisdiction made him anxious.

Isabel Burton came into her own in Damascus. She wrote dispatches for the *Levant Herald*, as "Our Correspondent in Damascus"—she would eventually write books on Syria— and the dispatches were often attacks on the Pasha's rule. Nobody was deceived about the identity of the troublemaking author of these dispatches; they were close in language and in spirit to Richard Burton's consular reports. Damascus was a boiling cauldron of ethnicities and interests. There were 4,000 Jews who were under Her Majesty's protection, and a Greek Orthodox community, and Protestant missionaries, and a conservative Muslim sensibility on watch against any concessions to the native minorities and the consuls. In the best of circumstances, this would have been difficult work.

But the Burtons were not given to tact. They were averse to the Jews and let them know it, and they had no special regard for the missionaries. It was not long before they had passionate critics with whom to contend. The missionaries wrote to the Foreign Office that the consul was trying to curry favor with "the more intolerant section of Damascus." The Jews appealed to London, and Sir Moses Montefiore, English Jewry's leading figure, wrote to the Foreign Secretary attaching petitions sent to him by the Jews of Damascus: "Your lordship will perceive that the Jews complain that the attitude affected towards them by Captain Burton, is such as to occasion much injury and considerable anxiety."

Damascus was the gift that the Burtons could not keep. An embarrassing quarrel on a camping trip to Nazareth broke out between Burton's party and the parishioners of a Greek Orthodox church, and this incident gave Henry Elliot and the Pasha the pretext that they needed to rid themselves of the flamboyant couple. The splendid trips to Palmyra, the vivid life against the background of a dazzling Oriental stage, came to an abrupt end a bare eighteen months or so after the dream of Arabia had come true.

They returned to England a broken couple. Isabel went to work repairing his—and her—reputation. She put together a "blue book" defending his record in Damascus. She launched yet another campaign for a new consular posting. They bided their time and then took to the social life of London. He took up a private commission surveying the sulfur mines of Iceland. Above all, the Burtons hoped that a posting in Morocco, or Istanbul, or Tehran would be given him: the Muslim east was always his lodestar. He offered his services also for an assignment in "the wilds"—Kabul, where he would monitor the doings of the Russians. But all that came his way was a posting in Trieste. The offer came, typically, in a letter to Isabel from the Foreign Secretary.

Trieste was a let-down after Damascus, and the Burtons knew it. They hoped against hope that a more splendid appointment would come. He wanted to be appointed "slave commissioner" for the Red Sea, to put an end to the contraband trade in eunuchs and Circassian and Nubian girls. But this posting at Trieste, which Burton took up when he was 52, was to be his last. He lived with a dream of deliverance: he prospected for gold in northwest Arabia, in partnership with the viceroy of Egypt. He thought that great wealth was around the corner. It was not. Lovell sees the irony in Burton's pipe-dreams. "The gold he had always sought," she writes, "lay not in the ground, but in his own inkwell." When financial deliverance came, it came out of the work he did at his desk, in Trieste, translating *The Arabian Nights*. Braving the wrath of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, he put out a huge translation of the flamboyant tales, first in a set of ten volumes in 1885, and then in six supplemental volumes in 1886-1888.

The Arabian Nights was not unknown to Western audiences. A French scholar named Antoine Galland had translated it into French in the early years of the eighteenth century. But Galland's version was plodding and lukewarm; he had squeezed the life out of the work, and edited out its cheerful and unflinching treatment of sexual deeds, the hedonism and the candor of these tales in which storytellers in Muslim cities had given free rein to their own imaginations, as they held their audiences spellbound with the vicissitudes of sex and fate and power. Between 1839 and 1841, an English translator named E.W. Lane produced a timid and bowdlerized version intended for the "drawing-room table." A better attempt at literary truth was made by John Payne in 1882-84; this was the version to which Burton admitted his own indebtedness. But Burton threw caution to the wind.

What was the line between pornography and literature? Burton was unembarrassed and unapologetic; he dismissed the earlier renderings (Payne's aside) as "garbled and mutilated, unsexed and unsouled." He defended the frankness of his own version in a widely read "Terminal Essay" in volume ten: "Such throughout the East is the language of every man, woman, and child, from prince to peasant, from matron to prostitute.... To those critics who complain of these raw vulgarisms and puerile indecencies in *The Nights* I can reply only by quoting the words said to have been said by Dr. Johnson to the lady who complained of the naughty words in his dictionary: 'You must have been looking for them, Madam!'" For the epigraph to his translation, Burton slyly chose an Arab proverb: "To the pure all things are pure."

The Arabian Nights was a huge success; it netted Burton a small fortune, fifteen or sixteen times his annual salary as consul. He allowed himself a bitter note: "I

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had struggled for forty-seven years, distinguishing myself honourably in every way that I possibly could. I never had a compliment, nor a 'thank you,' nor a single farthing. I translate a doubtful book in my old age, and I immediately make sixteen thousand guineas. Now that I know the tastes of England, we shall never be without money." Honor came as well: he was knighted in 1886, at the age of sixty-five. In the familiar way, Isabel had lobbied for his knighthood while he feigned disinterest.

Trieste may not have been what a man of adventure had wished for his mature years, but Burton accomplished things there. And not only his version of *The Arabian Nights*. In Trieste he made also a more ennobling contribution, his translations of Luis Vaz de Camoens, the greatest of Portugal's lyrical poets. Burton translated Camoens's shorter lyrics, and more importantly his *Lusiads*. "The most pleasing labour of my life has been to translate the Lusiads . . . of my master Camoens," he wrote. He had worked on that project in fits and starts, "without fixed design," since 1847. He finished it in Trieste in 1880. He had found shelter in that benign commercial city.

IV.

For all the swagger and the travel, there was something oddly tame about Richard Burton. His adventures seem sometimes like the pranks of an exhibitionistic man secure against the background of a successful, orderly world. Burton died in 1890 (and his wife died six years later)—that is, he passed from the scene before the Victorian age cracked. He died a decade before the death of Queen Victoria, a decade before a nasty little quarrel that broke out in the Transvaal turned into the Boer War, which shattered the self-confidence of empire. The Jubilee of Queen Victoria, in 1897, was the zenith of empire, but it was also the beginning of the end. There was a "trace of disquiet" in England, and an "unadmitted instinct that the time was running short," as Jan Morris has observed in *Farewell the Trumpets*. "The Boer War had cracked the British mirror; the Jubilee was over; the empire had grown too big for itself." The idea of a master race sure of itself in those far-flung outposts died in that savage war. Britain "won" against a band of irregulars; but the internment camps and the cruelties and the half-a-million man army it took to defeat the Boers broke the Victorian spirit, and set deadly precedents for the modernity that was dawning.

But Burton missed all that. Wilfred Scawen Blunt, a man two decades younger than Burton who was himself some-

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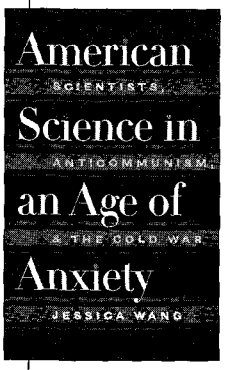

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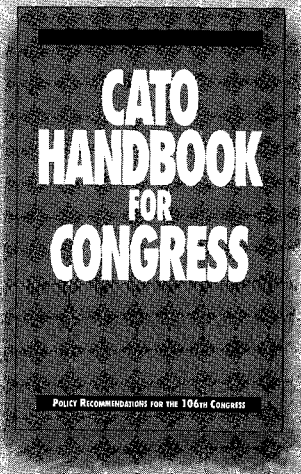

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thing of an "eastern traveller," an enthusiast and an aristocrat who took up the causes of Ireland and India and Egypt against British rule, saw through Burton's hectic motion. He dismissed him as "a sheep in wolf's clothing," and ridiculed his belief that he was at one with the Arabs. Blunt could feel the approaching storm in the east, but Burton had not felt it. In Burton's day, exploration had grown quaint; but it was not long before the kitsch of empire was torched in the anti-colonial politics stirring in distant places. Burton was literally buried beneath this kitsch. When he died, Isabel interred him in a Catholic cemetery in London. His marble tomb was made in the shape of an Arab tent, with camel-bells that tinkled when the door of the chapel opened.

So Burton is, for us, an anachronism, a creature of historical naïveté. He lies on the other side of the frontier to the modern world. We cannot detect in him the plangency and the pathos that we find so riveting in a later British traveller to the Arab east. T.E. Lawrence was a poser and a fantasist, an imperial agent and a "friend" of Arab nationalism who wanted to "hustle the new Asia" into the world, but he was a modern man. His story unfolded against a backdrop of disillusion and imperial ruin. He was no Hajji Abdullah slipping into the male brothels of Karachi. As he said of his journey into the world of the Arabs:

> A man who gives himself to be a possession of aliens leads a yahoo life, having bartered his soul to a brute-master. He is not one of them.... In my case, the effort of these years to live in the dress of the Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundations, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other.... Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then the madness was near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments.

There is no innocence in those words. They express the mourning of a divided consciousness. There was guilt in Lawrence, and there was doubt, and there was a shattered compact with progress. But Burton lived before such knowledge. For this reason, the haunted Lawrence and his solitary book live for us; but the work of Burton has been lost to us and largely forgotten.

Burton's limitations are best appreciated against the background of the life—and the life-mood—of his great hero Camoens. It was of himself that Burton must have been thinking when he described the Portuguese poet. "Camoens," he wrote,

> is the perfection of the traveller's study. A wayfarer and a voyager from his youth; a soldier somewhat turbulent withal, wounded and blamed for his wounds; a doughty sword and yet doughtier pen, a type of the chivalrous age, a patriot of the purest water, so jealous of his country's good fame that nothing would satisfy him but to see the world bow before her perfections; a genius, the first and foremost of his day, who died in the direst poverty and distress.

The element of autobiography is unmistakable in Burton's awe of the career of the Portuguese voyager: "The student, the soldier, the traveller, the patriot, the poet, the mighty man of genius, thus crowded into a single career the efforts, the purposes, the events of half-a-dozen."

And yet there was more to Camoens than travel. He, too, was familiar with disillusionment; and this is what his nineteenth-century admirer and translator did not see. Camoens was born in 1524, the year Vasco da Gama died, and he died in 1580, the year Portugal slipped under Castilian hegemony, which lasted for six decades. Imperial decline brackets the life of Camoens. He came into his own after Portugal's great imperial thrust had been broken.

A drifter and a romantic born in Lisbon, deeply schooled in Latin and the classics, Camoens lost his right eye in a military campaign in North Africa. Court intrigue, a botched love affair, and a feisty temperament sent him into exile in the east Indies, where he spent nearly seventeen of his adult years, in Goa and Cochin and Macao. He was in and out of debtors' prison, in and out of official favor. It was on the road, yearning for home, that he composed the ten cantos that make up the *Lusiads*. They were published in 1572, shortly after his return to Portugal. He returned, as Burton put it affectingly, to die in his country and to die with his country, for the 1570s had brought ruin to Portugal: plague, hunger, a quixotic crusade into North Africa that decimated its nobility, and finally Castilian rule.

Camoens gave immortal voice to the ambivalence about empire. He praised Portugal's voyages of exploration, its urge to "discover the sun's very cradle in the east." His epic poem was a tribute to the exploits of Vasco da Gama. There is patriotism aplenty in the *Lusiads*, a dread of the Moors and of the Turks, a crude national pride. But Camoens knew also the other side of the imperial story: the heartbreak and the decline. Portugal succumbed to despondency. What came, at mid-century, was a general retreat from progress, a campaign to root out the emboldening doctrines of Erasmus and to regiment the life of the country, a desperate bid to contain the Ottoman challenge in the Mediterranean and the more formidable challenge of the other maritime powers in Europe, who had begun to encroach on Portugal's overseas possessions.

Portugal had answered the call of empire, but the heroic effort, as Camoens lamented, had wrecked her peace of soul and mind. Here is Camoens, as "Englished" (Burton's word) by Captain Burton, on the follies of human ambition:

> Iapetus' daring Son from Heaven brought
> the fire he added human breast to bless;
> fire, that inflamed to wars a world distraught,
> with death and eke disgrace: (ah, sad distress!)
> How better far for us and ours hadst wrought
> Prometheus! And with loss of life the less;
> had thy famed Statue never felt the fire
> of great designs that 'gender great desire!

The archaism of the language does not conceal the reality of the sorrow.

In Canto IV, a wise old man, a "sire of reverend mien," comes to the shore to bid farewell to the voyagers, and to weep for his country and for the ruin that imperial temptation brought her:

> Oh craving of Command! Oh vain Desire!
> Oh vainest vanity man miscalleth Fame!
> Oh fraudulent gust, so easy fanned to fire
> by breath of vulgar, aping Honour's name!
> What just and dreadful judgement deals thine ire,
> to seely souls who overlove thy claim!
> What deaths, what direful risks, what agonies
> wherewith thou guerdonest them, thy fitting prize!
>
> What new disaster dost thou here design?
> What horror of our realm and race invent?
> What unheard dangers or what deaths condign,
> veiled by some name that soundeth excellent?
> What bribe of gorgeous reign, and golden mine,
> whose ready offer is so rarely meant?
> What fame hast promised them? What pride of story?
> What palms? What triumphs? What victorious glory?

It was no fault of Burton's that his age was what it was, that he lived and roamed before the disappointment and the reckoning. He has found his most serious and meticulous and honest biog-

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rapher in Mary S. Lovell, but no biographer can write into his story more depth than is warranted by his life. For he was nothing less than an adventurer, and nothing more. And adventure is just escapism justified by excitement. It is not undertaken for the sake of historical consciousness or historical responsibility. It hungers only for unsober and unanalyzed experience. Richard Burton could not foresee what terrible nemesis lay beyond his adventures, beyond the deserts and the lake of his imagination; but what he could not foresee, we look back upon. We are the children of the consequences. •

Half-Against Flaubert

BY JAMES WOOD

Gustave Flaubert: Selected Letters translated and with an introduction by Geoffrey Wall

(Penguin Classics, 430 pp., $13.95)

I.

It is hard not to resent Flaubert for making fictional prose stylish—for making style a problem for the first time in fiction. After Flaubert, and in particular after Flaubert's letters, style is always mirrored, always self-conscious, always a trapped decision. Style became religious with Flaubert, at the same moment that religion became a kind of literary style, a poetry, with Renan. Flaubert himself admired Rabelais, Cervantes, and Molière as if they were beasts of mere instinct: "they are great . . . because they have no techniques." Such writers "achieve their effects, regardless of Art," he wrote to his lover Louise Colet in 1853. But Flaubert could not be free as those writers: "One achieves style only by atrocious labour, a fanatic and dedicated stubbornness." He was imprisoned in scruple, and he imprisoned his successors in scruple. He is the novelist from whom the Modern, with all its narrow freedoms, flows.

Style had always been a battle for novelists, but Flaubert, in his letters at least, turned it into a perpetual defeat. Indeed, fiction itself was felt as a kind of defeat by Flaubert, it became a vessel defined by what it could not hold. Those letters, now available in a fine new translation by Geoffrey Wall, speak again and again of squeezed hours at his mother's house at Croisset, of how little he has written, of the monstrous difficulty of writing a sentence. It is at first surprising that this new consciousness of limit was born in the apparently limitless heyday of the novel, at the moment when the novel began to have a formal sense of how it should be conducting itself—the moment of European "realism." Flaubert was beholden to realism, but he also detested it. He was torn into two sensibilities, he wrote to Louise Colet: "In me, when it comes to literature, there are two quite distinct creatures: one who is very *taken* with being a *loudmouth*, with lyricism, with soaring like an eagle with all sonorities of phrase and loftinesses of idea; the other who digs and delves into the truth as far as he can, who loves to represent the little detail as powerfully as the other kind, who would like to make you feel almost *materially* the objects he describes."

Yet the romantic was stronger than the realist in Flaubert. His first major literary effort was the wildly lyrical *The Temptation of St. Antony*, a book that he partially abandoned in 1849 after reading it aloud (over four days) to his friends Maxime Du Camp and Louis Bouilhet. They told him, in effect, that it was a lush failure, that he must thin his wardrobe of luxuries, and discipline his style, and choose a nice bourgeois subject. He chose Emma Bovary's provincial adulteries. (*Madame Bovary* appeared in 1857.) But he returned again and again to his beloved *Temptation*, eventually publishing it in 1874. In this curious failure, St. Antony is tempted by sumptuous sensuality (the Queen of Sheba in flowing robes), by visions of power offered by the Devil, and by heresy. The book, which is written out in the form of a play, is silkily, weightlessly fantastical. Yet Flaubert's letters reveal that this book was the marriage of his life, and the others were merely affairs.

It is too simple to say that Flaubert romanticized realism. Still, his obsession with the sentence represents an attempt to turn prose into lines of consecutive verse, "to impart to prose the rhythm of verse (leaving it still prose and very prosey)," as he put it in 1853. Certainly, Flaubert's self-consciousness in this regard represents the collision of realism and romanticism, of the ordinary and the exotic, rather as strange forms of etiquette emerge when an old epoch falls into economic distress. The novel was triumphant at the middle of the century, and there is a sense in which Melville, Flaubert, and Gogol, all of them writing roughly contemporaneously, were poets who wanted to make the novel a genre that could consume all others and then perform all their functions at once—a stomach of genres, digesting satire, poetry, epic, the historical novel, realism, and fable. (*Moby-Dick*, *Dead Souls*, and *Madame Bovary* are all prose-poems of a kind, and were all called this on publication.) Flaubert was forever restless, telling his correspondents that he would write a fairy-tale, or a fantasy, or an historical epic, or his celebrated dictionary of stupidities; his gargantuan reading seems an ingestive response to this borderless hunger.

Under Flaubert, however, the novel's great expansion was perhaps an expansion into limit. Flaubert was marched by his army of ambitions into a war of literary possibilities, only to be overwhelmed by sheer option. The novel discovered all that it could do, all that it then had to do, and it collapsed out of fatigue into style, into the one thing any writer *must* do—not immediately, of course, not for a century, not perhaps until the *nouveau roman*, whose leading representative, Nathalie Sarraute, rightly asked in 1965: "How can it be doubted that Flaubert is the precursor?" Alain Robbe-Grillet, in his manifesto *For A New Novel* (1963), used Balzacian realism as his enemy, and pronounced Flaubert as the writer who changed the old order: "But then, with Flaubert, everything begins to vacillate. A hundred years later, the whole system is no more than a memory." For Robbe-Grillet, an evolution from Flaubert could be plotted along these lines (though Robbe-Grillet's list is rather meaningless): "Flaubert, Dostoevski, Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Faulkner, Beckett. . . Far from making a *tabula rasa* of the past, we have most readily reached an agreement on the names of our predecessors; and our ambition is merely to continue them."

When the nineteenth-century novel became madly ambitious to be everything, it began to chastise itself for failing to do everything. Taking everything as its only measure, it became afflicted with a sense of its failure, and began to throw off those ambitions, like a plane

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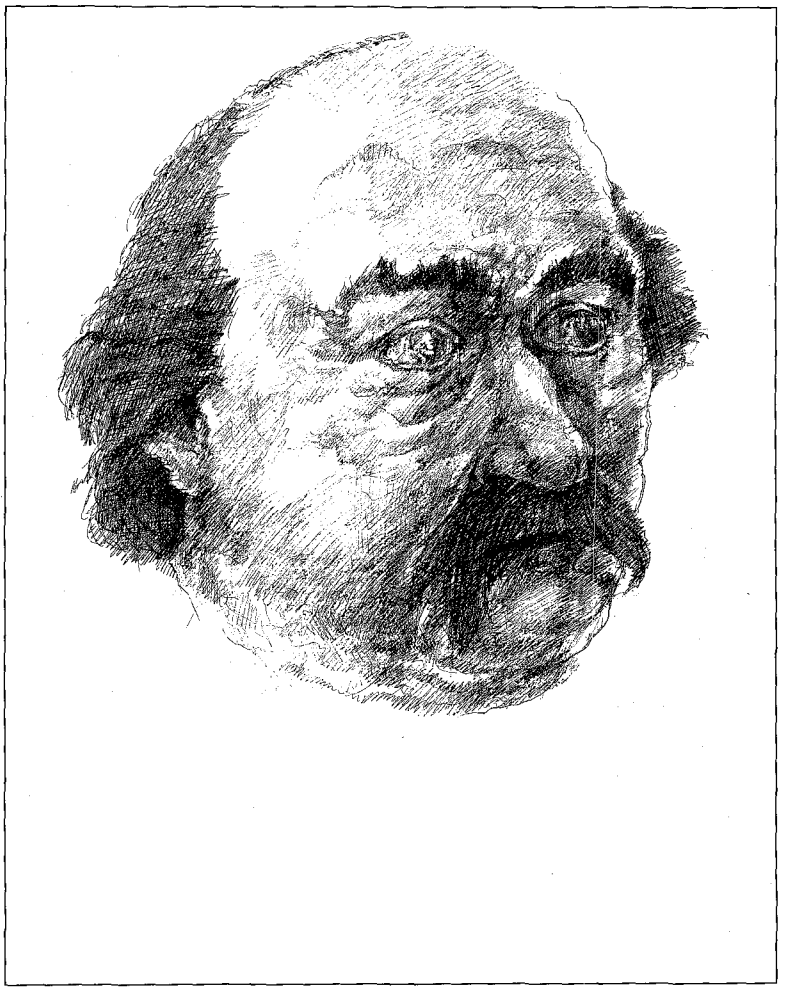
dumping fuel, until only one was left: its very essence, style itself. Until Flaubert, the novel had been mithridated in its own unself-consciousness, as an alcoholic thoughtlessly medicates himself; but Flaubert took away its sweet, ignorant poisons.

Style was a trapped decision for Flaubert, as it is for all his successors, because we are always in a relationship with style; indifference to style is no longer possible, and it is therefore converted into dilemma. Today, those writers who write "plainly" (the quotation marks register our self-consciousness), who leave style alone, must trudge along the plains looking at the mountains that they have chosen not to climb. And then, of course, the plainest writers now become "stylists" too, stylists of renunciation. Flaubert gave birth to Nabokov on one side and to Hemingway on the other. In short, Flaubert made the novel a painterly activity, and perhaps in so doing he threatened the novel with the danger of irrelevance. He aspired to write "a book about nothing, a book with no external attachment.... The most beautiful books are those with the least matter," he wrote in 1852; and in the same letter he wrote that "from the point of view of Art, there is no such thing as a subject, style being solely in itself an absolute way of seeing things."

From the present day, when novels "about nothing" abound, Flaubert's words seem ominous. For "an absolute way of seeing things" becomes too easily an obsession with the *way* of seeing; the important things disappear. Thus it is that Georges Perec's tedious book *Things: A Story of the Sixties*, which attempts heavily to log the impedimenta of a decade (the clothes, the fabrics, the styles), is actually a novel that sees negligible things, but that prides itself on its way of seeing things. And the way of seeing things turns out again and again to be only *seeing*, or the pictorial. From Flaubert comes that fetishizing of the visual for which Nabokov is always praised and which is actually his deepest limitation.

This is hardly to deny that Flaubert is a great writer, or that his talent for visual detail is a joy, one of the deep textures of his writing, whether it is the smoke of a moving railway engine, "stretched out in a horizontal line, like a gigantic ostrich feather whose tip kept blowing away," or this lovely tableau from *Sentimental Education*: "The proprietor and his wife were having supper with the waiter in the corner by the kitchen; and Regimbart, with his hat on, was sharing their meal, and indeed getting in the way of the waiter, who was forced to turn slightly to one side at every mouthful." This is beautiful, with that gently ridiculous comedy that Flaubert often produces.



GUSTAVE FLAUBERT BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Yet the danger of Flaubert's heavily pictorial details is that they flatter the seen over the unseen, the external over the interior (and Flaubert is not actually a great novelist of interiority), that writing becomes primarily, and in some cases only, a way of making us feel "almost materially the objects [it] describes." In addition to the tyranny of the visual, moreover, there comes the tyranny of the detail. Valéry, who did not care for Flaubert's fiction, commented sourly in a notebook of 1924: "Another vice of this style—there's always room for one more detail." Flaubert gave birth to the orthodoxy that the finest style of writing is a procession of strung details, a necklace of sensualities. We see this today in Updike, but above all we see it in Nabokov, who, in his story "First Love," describes a man whose head is twisted rather as Regimbart's was in the café in *Sentimental Education*: "On the promenade near the casino, an elderly flower-girl, with carbon eyebrows and a painted smile, nimbly slipped the plump torus of a carnation into the buttonhole of an intercepted stroller whose left jowl accentuated its royal fold as he glanced down sideways at the coy insertion of the flower."

This description sounds more like a logic-puzzle than a sentence, a kind of anagram of detail appealing for decoding. In Nabokov especially, the anxiety with which Flaubert surrounds detail becomes a kind of terror, an inability to draw away from detail; and a concomitant paralysis, a static cult of the local; a frieze. Similarly, Updike's ridiculous mysticism of detail—"the miraculous knit of his jockey shorts"—is a logical perversion of Flaubertian style.

Flaubert—more often, it is true, the Flaubert of the letters than the Flaubert of the novels, who often surgingly overcomes his own programs—established for us our idea of realism: a pressure of detail; a poised, deliberate chosenness. In Flaubert, the monstrous chosenness of detail is revealed through reticence. The pressure of the prose is the pressure of the thought that preceded it but that does not lie on the page. The great descriptions in Flaubert—the great ball at La Vaubyessard in *Madame Bovary*, or the agricultural show in the same novel, or the Parisian barricades of 1848 in *Sentimental Education*—are surrounded by the ghost of avoidance, by everything that was rejected to produce this style, by the careful hiatus, by the intelligent starvation.

It is the idea of paint, of depiction rather than thought or commentary: the very speck of the real. Contemporary writing—Robert Stone is an obvious

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example—takes Flaubert's controlled visual sweep, shaves off some of its richness, and merely cinematizes it. How would a town square in Italy or Brazil be described nowadays? I will parody the style: "In the north-east corner, a woman threw out her bucket of water, the contents of which briefly yellowed the large, red slabs of the town square. On the other side, a priest, who had been reading the excitable morning paper, looked up and smiled, apparently to himself. His paper rustled in the small, hot breeze like fire. A piano could be heard; Miss Dupont was giving her first lesson of the day." This kind of thing is the staple not only of realism, but also of magical realism and of thriller writing. And there is a good reason for the influence of this ideal, because precisely observed detail is the food of any decent fiction. But Flaubert surely institutionalized this way of writing, canonized it into orthodoxy. That is, he made it into a style: "A breeze from the window ruffled the cloth on the table, and down in the square the peasant women's big bonnets lifted up, fluttering like white butterflies' wings."

In particular, Flaubert licensed the idea that writing does not comment on itself. It presents and withdraws, like a good footman. Flaubert is famous for his desire for impersonality. He wanted the author to look down from above. "When will all the facts be written from the point of view of a superior farce, that's to say, as the good God sees them, from on high?" he asked Colet in 1852. From this flows Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway, the ideal of highly stylized reporting. Indeed, in some respects, Flaubert's descriptions of revolutionary urban violence in *Sentimental Education* might be said to have influenced war-writing and the way novelists write about war. "Frédéric felt something soft under his foot; it was the hand of a sergeant in a grey overcoat who was lying face down in the gutter." When Roque fires into a crowd of prisoners and shoots someone, Flaubert marshals that cold discipline we think of as a twentieth-century invention: "There was a tremendous howl, then nothing. Something white remained on the edge of the grating." His prose, like a good doctor, does not get emotionally involved; it refuses to follow the anarchy of its subject-matter—and thus, in one respect, denies its own subject-matter, acts as if the subject is not there.

One recalls Flaubert's dream of writing a book about nothing, that would contain "the least matter." Flaubert is able to achieve his two contradictory ambitions, to write fiction that is densely detailed, densely involved with matter *and* fiction without matter, because his style refuses the pull of matter, asserts itself over matter. His prose will not register emotionally what it depicts visually. Again, there are excellent literary reasons for Flaubert's strictness in this regard, and in his letters he gives them: the avoidance of sentimentality is the chief advantage. Yet the legacy of Flaubert's rigour of denial is, nowadays, too often a dumbness, an unthoughtful and undemonstrative literature preening itself on its inability (rather than its unwillingness) to feel, and broken into units of hard sensation, and merely swiping at life.

From Flaubert, then, come the two main strands of contemporary writing: the aestheticism of style, or books "about nothing" (the *nouveau roman*, the avant-garde, and so on); and the silence of fact, or books simply strung on detail, or on nuggets of hard, empirical observation (which can mean a wide range of fiction, from the more worked writing of Hemingway and Perec to the plainness of Carver and Robert Stone). Philosophically, the legacy can be put thus: Flaubert is the father of aestheticism and symbolism; and he is the father of literary positivism. He reveals that these two kinds of writing have something in common: neither can ever be innocent

Judgment Day at the White House

A Critical Declaration Exploring Moral Issues and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion

EDITED BY Gabriel Fackre

"Politically, the president may survive his time on the cross," Kenneth Woodward writes in *Newsweek*, but many leading religious thinkers "still doubt his spiritual sincerity." Seeing the current crisis in the White House as a critical moment in the life of our nation, more than 140 scholars of religion and public life have penned the "Declaration concerning Religion, Ethics, and the Crisis in the Clinton Presidency," a statement meant to bring clarity to the moral confusion caused by the presidential scandal.

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about the primacy of style, and thus each is a form of aestheticism. Flaubert invented both hard aestheticism and soft aestheticism, as it were. And in doing so, of course, he became a great writer, for when he is at his greatest he is simultaneously an aesthete and a positivist, a magus of the sentence and a novelist of thingy paragraphs and chapters—as is Joyce, Flaubert's greatest student.

II.

Flaubert insisted that fiction should not judge. Like Chekhov, he felt that the writer should resist conclusion, should only ask the right questions. "Stupidity consists in wanting to reach conclusions. We are a thread, and we want to know the whole design." A novel, he wrote, is to be "without love or hate for any of the characters." His dream of impersonality was in part a desire to withdraw from judgment: "one must accept everything, resigned to not concluding." Yet Flaubert did in fact judge, and he did conclude—being "resigned to not concluding" *is* a form of conclusion, *is* a resignation. He was bearishly fatalistic: "I deny individual freedom."

Thus one detects in Flaubert the mid-nineteenth-century aestheticizing of religious attitudes that also afflicted Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold. "What attracts me above all else is religion," he wrote in 1857. "I mean all religions, no one more than another. Each dogma in particular is repulsive to me, but I consider the feeling that invented them as the most natural and poetic of humanity." He wrote often of "aesthetic mysticism." "To my mind, the true poet is a priest." His life was a monkish sequestration: "Great achievements always require fanaticism. Fanaticism is religion . . . In Art as well, it is Art-fanaticism which is the artistic feeling."

Flaubert aestheticized religion—but he retained the old judgmental habits of Christianity, the renunciatory disgust, the penance of being alive. He is distinctly medieval. "A man is no more than a flea," he complained in August 1853. "How nothingness encroaches on us!" After a visit to the dentist, in December 1846, he exclaimed that "during our lives we are merely corruption and putrefaction, in succession and alternation." Seven days later, again to Colet, he elaborated: "What can it be that made me so old as I left my cradle, gave me such a distaste for happiness before I had even tasted it? Everything to do with life is repellent to me. . . . I have within me, deep down, a radical, intimate, bitter, incessant vexation which stops me enjoying everything and fills my heart to bursting."

Yet Flaubert was not a religious believer, and so religious judgment had lost all grandeur for him, and had become metaphysically null. Judgment surrendered its holy prestige and became a kind of secular mid-nineteenth-century whining—irritation, boredom, disgust, a perpetual "vexation" at the "ridiculousness" of humanity. Compared to religious judgment, this judgment exists in a demoted metaphysical space. It is almost a kind of bourgeois pettiness, and Flaubert, who abhorred the bourgeois but who recognized his own bourgeois traits, probably sensed the littleness of his complaint, its non-tragic nature. One suspects that Flaubert was bored by his boredom, and disgusted at his disgust. He could not help evacuating religious judgment of the religious.

So it is not really that Flaubert withdraws from his books to become God, for God does not exist. No, he withdraws only to the place that God would occupy if God existed. This strange, vacated metaphysics is reflected in the fiction. The insistent thrust of Flaubert's fiction is towards nullification. He looks upon his fictional world like an angry God who no longer exists. He lays waste to his people; he is disappointed in them. Henry James, who admired Flaubert, rightly complained that Frédéric, the young hero of *Sentimental Education*, is an uninteresting blank, and that the novel is thus something of an "empty epic." The only burning question of *Sentimental Education* is whether Frédéric is going to have sex with his various lovers. Frédéric has no other apparent preoccupation.

Perhaps Flaubert wanted to create a

Courtesy

It is an afternoon towards the end of August:
Autumnal weather, cool following on,
And riding in, after the heat of summer,
Into the empty afternoon shade and light,

The shade full of light without any thickness at all;
You can see right through and right down into the depth
Of the light and shade of the afternoon; there isn't
Any weight of the summer pressing down.

In the backyard of the house next door there's a kid,
Maybe eleven or twelve, and a young man,
Visitors at the house whom I don't know,
The house in which the sound of some kind of party,

Perhaps even a wedding, is going on.
Somehow you can tell from the tone of their voices
That they don't know each other very well—
Two guests at the party, one of them, maybe,

A friend of the bride or groom, the other the son
Or the younger brother, maybe, of somebody there.
A couple of blocks away the wash of traffic
Dimly sounds, as if we were near the ocean.

They're shooting baskets, amiably and mildly.
The noise of the basketball, though startlingly louder
Than the voices of the two of them as they play,
Is peaceable as can be, something like meter.

The earnest voice of the kid, girlish and manly;
And the voice of the young man, carefully playing the game
Of having a grown up conversation with him.
I can tell the young man is teaching the boy by example,

The easy way he dribbles the ball and passes it
Back with a single gesture of wrist to make it
Easy for the kid to be in synch;
Giving and taking, perfectly understood.

David Ferry

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character so foolishly vain and empty that he would wander through Paris during the 1848 revolution and nullify the excitements around him. And that he does; but then the novel also nullifies them, and rather nullifies itself, despite its many ravishments. (It is certainly a great novel.) If Frédéric is something of a dud, St. Antony, in the *Temptation*, as Valéry complained, "hardly exists." Temptations swirl around him, but they seem largely an opportunity for Flaubert to aerate his style.

The psychology of desire interests Flaubert not at all. Emma Bovary is a beautiful creation, yet one feels that the truest, most vivid Flaubertian character is Homais, the vain and pompous chemist in that novel, a character straight out of Molière. Flaubert's characters seem like mistakes; his disgust is felt on every page. *Madame Bovary* ends on a note of disgust at the continuance of these mistakes: "He [Homais] has just been awarded the Legion of Honour" is its famous, sour last sentence. Flaubert complained that it was a great effort to write *Madame Bovary*, because "I find them [the characters] deeply repulsive."

Realism was a kind of penance. During the early, youthful writing of the *Temptation*, he had felt full and voluptuous. But now "I have to spend every minute living under the *skins* of people that I cannot stand. For six months I have been making love platonically and at the moment I am most catholically exalted at the sound of church-bells...." One notes the writer's italicization of "skins"; he feels realism as a religious mortification, a lashing of his own skin in order that he might inhabit that of others.

A comparison might usefully be made with Chekhov. Although Chekhov agreed with Flaubert that literature should not draw obvious conclusions, these writers differed in revealing ways. Flaubert did in fact draw conclusions, resignedly; and so did Chekhov, but rebelliously. In contrast to Flaubert's disgust at his characters, or even to Flaubert's advice that one should neither love nor hate them, Chekhov told Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik, "Love your characters—but not aloud!" Thus it is that we feel that Flaubert's characters are doomed, while Chekhov's are only imprisoned. This is best seen in the way both writers use a technique which might be called alternation—the alternation of high and low, of the serious and comic, the sublime and the ridiculous. Alternation is the large principle of both writers: while Paris importantly burns, Frédéric thinks trivially only about sex; and when poor Gusev dies in Chekhov's story of the same name, he is wrapped in sailcloth, and looks like a radish, broad at the top and narrow at the bottom. It is also the local stylistic principle of both writers.

A famous example occurs in *Madame Bovary*, when Rodolphe seduces Emma in the town hall. The couple sit at the window and watch the doltish agricultural show below. An especially pompous prefect's deputy is addressing the villagers about agricultural techniques, while upstairs, the cynical Rodolphe is filling Emma's susceptible ear with high-minded words about "fate" and "love" and "beauty." The passions, says Rodolphe, who means not a word of it, are "the source of all heroism and enthusiasm, poetry, music, everything." Meanwhile, the speech downstairs has moved onto flax, cabbage, and manure. Flaubert intercuts these two speeches, running them like lines of alternating verse:

> "And I've stayed with you, because I couldn't tear myself away, though I've tried a hundred times."
> "Manure!"

This is a much-admired scene, yet it seems vicious, the ironies suffocating and deterministic, the technique somewhat crudely insistent. What would seem an accidental alternation in Chekhov—the two lovers have just happened to find themselves at the foolish fair—seems a deliberate juxtaposition in Flaubert. He tells us, in effect, that both spectacles, both speeches, are idiotic, and that Emma will never escape this idiocy: both her prison and her escape are stupid.

Chekhov's great story, "The Lady With The Dog," is instructive by comparison. In *Madame Bovary*, a woman foolishly begins an affair in high hopes of escape, and finds herself doomed. In Chekhov's story, the structural "alternation" of the story proceeds in exactly the opposite direction: a man cynically begins an affair with no hope except for a dalliance, is surprised by its power, and finds himself imprisoned. Fearfully, but joyfully, he and his lover plot to escape their imprisonment. In Chekhov, alternation is not used to nullify, as Flaubert uses it, but to intensify the desire for escape. Very beautifully, alternation allows Chekhov to show his characters both the prison and the key to that prison in the same moment.

In "The Lady With The Dog," the adulterers meet at the theatre, and snatch a kiss on the stairs to the circle. From above, in a detail that Nabokov admired, two schoolboys watch them, while smoking cigarettes. The schoolboys have an arbitrary, careless presence that Flaubert would not have allowed. But more than that, they are both prison and release. They represent the watchful society that oppresses the adulterers and makes their affair so impossible—yet they are only schoolboys, without real judgment, and in some ways they represent a world beyond concern.

Similarly in "The Russian Master," the provincial teacher feels suffocated by the kind of small-town littleness that Flaubert drew so finely in *Madame Bovary*. The teacher is haunted by a single recrimination uttered by a colleague: "Have you never read Lessing?" As Flaubert alternates Emma's romances with Homais's pomposities, Chekhov uses the sentence about Lessing as an alternating refrain in the story. But where Homais is nothing more than Emma's prison-warder, and one who outlives both her and Charles Bovary to end the novel in obtuse prosperity, Lessing is both prison and key to the teacher. The question oppresses the teacher, yet Lessing, the German philosopher, represents a world of reading and knowledge that exists beyond the small town.

There is a sense in which Chekhov—without meaning to, and in a very different aesthetic and political context—"solved" all the desperate literary dilem-

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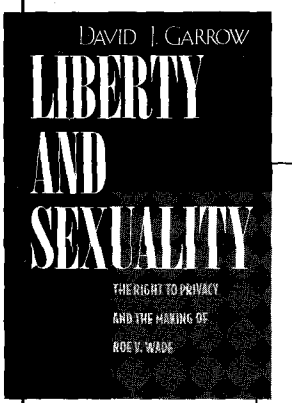

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mas that rifled Flaubert. If, as Stephen Heath put it in his fine book about Flaubert, "it is with [Flaubert] that literature becomes *essentially* problematic," then it was with Chekhov that it became again essentially unproblematic (in the aesthetic sense that Heath intends). If realism was a stylistic agony for Flaubert, it was a moral necessity for Chekhov. If Flaubert retained and aestheticized religious judgment, Chekhov paganized life. If Flaubert disliked his characters from afar, Chekhov loved his closely. If Flaubert's people are all mistakes, Chekhov's people, even the fools, are always forgiven. If Flaubert turned style into a monkish fetish, Chekhov made of it a worldly devotion. Where Flaubert judges his characters' fantasies, Chekhov indulges them.

And yet in the last hundred pages of *Madame Bovary*, as all readers have surely encountered, something beautifully Chekhovian begins to happen. The novelist who found realism such a penance begins to be aroused by his own mortification. The hairshirt prickles suggestively. St. Gustave is tempted—tempted into love. Emma begins to live, she pulls away from Flaubert's earlier disapproval. Flaubert seems to forgive her for the tawdry escapism of her dreams. He begins to sympathize with her. Something heroic stirs in the folds of her scanty soul. The novel, eerily, finds a momentum of its own, as if it had created itself. It is utterly mysterious, this transformation, and only shows what a great writer Flaubert, despite his failures, really was. It is certainly a kind of "aesthetic mysticism," worthy of our entirely unmystical reverence. •

Monks and Moderns

BY PETER PHILLIPS

Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes by Katherine Bergeron

(University of California Press, 196 pp., $35)

The revival of interest in Gregorian chant in the nineteenth century has many of the elements of a great melodrama: a struggle against seemingly impossible odds, a last-ditch rescue of an entire cultural heritage, tense moral issues affecting the highest in the land, ruined buildings in the remote countryside, strong clashing personalities. It is a romantic story that embraces not only musical monks, but also secular writers who were Christian sympathizers. "Solesmes stands alone," wrote Huysmans in *L'Oblat*. "There is no place like it in the whole of France; religion there has an artistic splendour to be met with nowhere else; the chant is perfect; the services are conducted with maximum pomp. Where else, too, could I ever hope to meet an Abbot as broad-minded as Dom DeLatte, or experts in musical paleography more skilled or learned? . . ."

Whether it was the influence of such perfumed styles, or the grandeur of the plot, or the particular charm which the spectacle of nineteenth-century people resurrecting the distant past seems to exercise on twentieth-century people, there is a detectable mistiness about Katherine Bergeron's interesting account of the remarkable history of the monks of Solesmes. Not many academic studies in the history of music include sentences such as, "Having captured the plainchant—the soul of the monastery, the echo of history—the modern Benedictines thus affected to fix it in stone, to preserve this modern idea of the Middle Ages for future visitors to Solesmes, visitors who, like the monks themselves, found history enchanted"; but there is plenty more of the kind in this book.

The history in question has now spanned nearly 170 years. The tale begins in 1833, when a young cleric named Prosper Guéranger conceived the idea of purchasing an abandoned priory on the Sarthe river in Solesmes, France. His intention was to restore to his homeland the Benedictine way of life, which had been devastated in the Revolution of the 1790s. (Writing of the impact of the French Revolution on French religion, in his *Génie du Christianisme*, Chateaubriand imagined the figure of Time, relieved of his scythe, looking on "astonished" as men "[laid] waste in the twinkling of an eye what it would have taken him whole ages to destroy.") Guéranger embarked on a program of religious rescue and cultural reaction, rather like his contemporary Migne, who sought to undo the anticlerical damage of the Revolution by publishing the vast corpus of patristic literature. Guéranger and his followers also needed to be as much scholars as worshippers, since the rituals, the texts, and the music of the many daily services required by the rule of Saint Benedict had been all but buried in France by the great godless upheaval, and the Church itself for a time was outlawed.

In the beginning, the goal was the restoration of a functioning Benedictine monastery, in very uncertain times for the church. Eventually, however, the emphasis fell more on the liturgical and musicological research that the monks collectively undertook, so that, having led the way through the example of their daily lives in reviving a tradition, they came to dominate the details of that tradition through their publications, which began to appear in 1873. It is in this latter role that Solesmes is so important now; and of all the different aspects of their research into the liturgies, none has had greater impact than their views about plainchant. From the choice of the melodies themselves, to the way it is notated on the page, to the style in which the Solesmes monks themselves perform it, anyone who has studied or sung chant during this century will have felt the influence of the Solesmes revival.

It is a mighty achievement, for which the greatest accolade is that most singers over several generations now have assumed that the Solesmes method has direct links with the practice of the Middle Ages. That those links were only indirect, that the performance decisions of the monks were sometimes highly speculative, is mostly forgotten by modern performers, who are happy to feel themselves secure in the authority of an ancient tradition. It helps, at any rate, that there is now no ready alternative to those decisions, at least in the way that chant is notated, or that particular melodies are deemed appropriate for particular feast-days, since Solesmes has eliminated whatever competition there might have been through the publication of its *Liber Usualis*. The Solesmes style of singing is distinguished by its particular kind of legato, which essentially assumes that every note is the same length but allows considerable flexibility in performance. This flexible legato underlies the monks' wonderful sweep of phrase, often rolling on without interruption for many minutes. There is passion in the Solesmes performances, but it lies just under the surface, and so initially the sound may seem restrained.

In the matter of how to sing these melodies, of course, there is inevitably

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less conformity than in the matter of how to notate them; but listening to the Solesmes recordings again I am reminded of how much we have all learned from them, consciously or unconsciously, about the discipline of choral singing, whether it be in plainchant or its direct descendant, Renaissance polyphony. If good ensemble, unanimous and sensitive phrasing, blend and tuning are your goals, there is nothing better than Solesmes.

For much of the twentieth century, the Solesmes vision has seemed so central to the more cultivated forms of Christian worship—Catholic and Protestant—that one might make the mistake of thinking that it has always been unassailable. Bergeron's book recounts the means by which this predominance was secured. Probably the greatest strength of the Solesmes campaign was that its intensely idealistic foundation, which in 1835 had six members, from the start attracted individuals of the highest caliber. Reading the speeches and the essays reported by Bergeron, one is left in no doubt that Prosper Guéranger (1805-75) himself, and then Joseph Pothier (1835-1923) and his pupil André Mocquereau (1849-1930), gave the most effective and essentially unified vision of what was needed to achieve their ambitious ends that any confraternity of academics anywhere in Europe could have provided.

This is in itself remarkable, since even up to the point at which Bergeron concludes her narrative—the outbreak of the First World War—there were periods of intense disagreement among the monks and disappointment from outside sources. The Papacy did not recognize the work of Solesmes until 1904, and then equivocally. As late as 1884, Leo XIII reaffirmed the Vatican's long-standing commitment to a quite different publisher of chant—Friedrich Pustet—against strenuous lobbying from Pothier. Moreover, Pothier and Mocquereau by no means always saw eye-to-eye on the nature and the function of chant. For many years, the Vatican refused to make any move toward institutionalizing their efforts—and then it appropriated all their ideas, while trying to marginalize Mocquereau's more contentious theories concerning the oral tradition of chant singing, which operates beyond the limits of textual criticism. The Papacy could not tolerate that kind of unscripted speculation. The nadir came in 1901, when religious communities were effectively banned for a second time in France, and the entire community of Solesmes had to move to the Isle of Wight, where it stayed for twenty-one years. But by then the elements of the Solesmes method had been established, and it was soon to be seen as a canonical tradition in its own right.

Bergeron involves herself deeply with the particulars of what it took to establish a modern tradition on an older one. Finally her view is too narrow, but her insistence on detail brings its own rewards. Confronted with the question of how the monks created their famous type-face for chant (and the texts to the chants), she devotes a whole chapter to the history of type in the late nineteenth century. Pothier invented the "Gregorian font" from studying the best of what he could find from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Judging by its first appearance in a manuscript of 1873, it is very clear, very correct, using the full range of traditional note-shapes, ornaments, and ligatures on four-line staves and illuminated initial letters. Despite some confusing sentences on the theory of legibility in certain kinds of script, Bergeron is inventive about the possible connections between William Morris's idealism and the monks' practical needs. Both wanted to confer on their publications an aura of the antique which nonetheless would be easy to read. It is fascinating to follow Pothier struggling to define what the perfect Gregorian face should consist of, just as Morris had struggled to find the perfect roman face.

If such a discussion should seem to unbalance the book, it does go some way toward supporting the most diverting of Bergeron's side-shows. This she presents in the words of the great nineteenth-century French architect Viollet-le-Duc: to restore an edifice, he observed, "means neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to reestablish it in a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time." Viollet-le-Duc put this theory into effect on medieval buildings all over France at precisely the time that Pothier and Mocquereau were trying to fill those restorations with restored sound. For Bergeron, what Viollet-le-Duc and Pothier were doing was intimately linked. It was what we now call "authenticity."

Bergeron avoids the A-word, but its ghost hovers about her pages as if wondering why no one has seen it. Bergeron follows the topic only insofar as it refers to the restoration of something tangible—buildings or notes on the page—whereas the extension of it to include the practice of what the monks actually sang (and recorded), and why, would seem natural. Did the nineteenth-century monks invent their approach to

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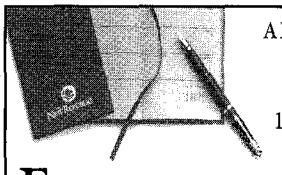

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singing chant from scratch, willfully, or did they base it on an earlier practice (on chant being sung in their own time that they could hear, or on the memories of old men who sang in churches before the Revolution, or on descriptions from medieval accounts, or on the innate style of the music)? Bergeron takes the Solesmes method completely for granted.

Within the limits that she sets herself, however, the topic is pursued in depth, and it raises some fascinating questions. Thus she cites Viollet-le-Duc, in the process of asking about copying the figures on the façade of Notre-Dame Cathedral: "Where is the sculptor who could retrieve with the point of his chisel the naïveté of past centuries?" This general premise of strict authenticity, the assumption that one can indeed find one's way back to the original, led to a fundamentally hostile critique of Mocquereau's tireless collating of manuscript sources in the search for the most authentic form of a chant melody, by the German musicologist Peter Wagner, in 1907:

> For the possibility is that we end up with a mode of singing which has never and nowhere existed. The newly employed statistical investigation of the materials of the readings for individual notes or groups brings nothing but scraps of melody, each of which, looked at in itself, appears in its "purest" or "oldest" reading. However, together they all produce melodies which have never existed in that form. The purely statistical method of research for the "oldest" version can thus logically turn into the other extreme, to the denial of any tradition.

These are significant strictures, of the sort that have not been adequately addressed in all the theorizing that has accompanied the Early Music revival of recent years. Much has been said about how closely such and such a group has come, in the opinion of such and such a writer, to what the composer must originally have heard; but almost never is it made plain that any particular performance, despite all the research and all the meticulous recreation that goes into it, is bound to be nothing more than something "which never actually existed at any given time," except now. In choosing not to apply these ideas to what the Solesmes monks were doing with performance practice, Bergeron elides a central aspect of what they were reviving.

There is also the question of whether chant is really music at all, at least in the way that pure music or abstract music—a symphony or a fugue—is music. This issue is raised by any melody that seems to fit its text like the proverbial glove. (Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme* or Purcell's *Songs* come to mind as examples of how this has been most ably achieved.) Thus Pothier wrote "there is in the Catholic liturgy of the Church a music that . . . is at once a word and a song, a rich and powerful music that is also simple and natural, a music that does not seek to be music, does not listen to itself, but is released as a spontaneous cry of religious thought and feeling." From this characteristically throbbing definition came the idea that chant (as Bergeron writes) "was nothing more than highly expressive speaking," or "a musical act falling into the blissfully undefined space between speaking and singing"; and from this came the notion that the rhythm of chant (in Pothier's words) "always flows from the accent of speech, as from its primary and natural source."

It is in this spirit that Bergeron undertakes a rather bizarre exercise toward the end of the book, where she transcribes speeches by Pothier and Mocquereau in pitched chant notation, to show how their deliveries differed from each other. If this sounds extreme, though, it is nothing compared with Mocquereau's incorporation of choreography into his vision of how chant should be performed. In order to sing chant with the desired sense of flexibility, Mocquereau instructed his singers to dance it! This choreography involved the movement of the hands to the rise and the fall of the musical phrases, which was to be done in silence, as Bergeron describes it: "Students would begin their drill, Mocquereau advised, by reading the notes without singing them, contemplating the Gregorian rhythms in reverent silence, drilling them into their bodies without any noise at all." The theoretical justification for it was provided by Mocquereau's study of the Greek notion of *orchesis*, "a complex art that consisted in expressing every emotion by means of a gesture." It was left to Mocquereau's American disciple Justine Ward to explain exactly how this might be realized:

> Each child should be provided with a light veil of tulle or similar filmy material with which to carry out in action the rhythmic exercises of the early chapters. These veils are no mere ornament but a fundamental element in acquiring that vocal lightness, smoothness and legato, that soaring quality, that ethereal flight wherein lies the charm and beauty of the Gregorian phrase.

There are two disappointments in Bergeron's central thesis, both resulting from her uncritical sympathy for what might be called the Romantic View: she fails to consider chant as music, and so ultimately fails to explain its appeal, which is the subject of the book; and she takes Pothier and Mocquereau entirely on their own terms, which means becoming Francocentric, and misleadingly giving the impression that France was on its own in the whole business. Of the two omissions the first is the more defensible, since a full-blown analysis of the manner in which chant is constructed—the way its motifs repeat and develop—is a very big subject. Still, some discussion of it would have helped the reader to understand what kind of decision Mocquereau was making when he preferred one manuscript reading over another, as he put together his epoch-making anthologies. To take the music for granted leaves a hole at the heart of the account. In the end this is a story about music and the effect that it had on people, not vice versa.

The Solesmes monks were central to the revival of chant and chanting in the nineteenth century, but they were not alone. In France, the Revolution destroyed every aspect of the monastic tradition, and so Guéranger was indeed on his own when he bought the buildings at Solesmes; but Bergeron never makes it clear that he was on his own only in France. Elsewhere in the Catholic world the traditions were still alive and unaffected by the Jacobins, for all that they were not particularly vital and eventually no competition for Solesmes. For most of the period covered by this book, for example, the official printer to the Holy See for the publication of the Church's liturgical books, from 1868 to 1883, was Friedrich Pustet II of Ratisbon (now Regensburg), a German. Although Bergeron briefly describes what Pustet (and his adviser, the great Palestrina scholar Franz Xaver Haberl) was publishing, one never has the impression that here was a full-blown alternative to Solesmes.

Occasionally in Bergeron's book one catches a glimpse of a wider field of activity: "From the very first page we can count the ways it [Solesmes' *Liber Gradualis*] distinguished itself from the standard fare of European presses"; "Soon after the release of the 1903 *Motu proprio* on sacred music, interested parties from all sides. . . ."; "The other Roman members included figures instrumental in the recent Gregorian Congress, not only Father de Santi but also Baron Kanzler and his colleague Father Rella"; "Such theories were by no means new: non-Benedictine chant scholars in both France and Germany had promoted this type of performance throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century." Yet

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all these extra-Gallic realities seem to come from nowhere, for Bergeron gives them no context. Here, too, there is a hole in the fine phrases.

And some of the phrases are not so fine. The "decadent enchantments" of Bergeron's title is just the beginning of a tiresome Huysmansesque play on words and language. This double-entendre about "chant" recurs again and again: "With this ruling the Vatican completed the set of legislative actions by which it officially dis-enchanted the Benedictines of Solesmes for the good of the Church"; "to consider the narratives of free rhythm in their work is to encounter the central, defining mystery in the Gregorian restoration at Solesmes, a mystery whose multiple faces may serve, finally, to illuminate the complex meaning of fin-de-siècle enchantment." Not all the double meanings are quite as vapid as this. There is a clever use of the word "tact," in at least two senses, made to distinguish the different approaches of Pothier and Mocquereau; but overall Bergeron's prose is too taken with its own cleverness. She knows a great deal, but she over-writes. "Inside the more luxurient space of this expanded staff, the chant melodies sigh, or dreamily float, on buoyant channels of white": that has echoes of P.G. Wodehouse at his Madeline Bassett best.

Yet sometimes Bergeron goes right to the heart of the matter. "Through the power of mechanical reproduction," she observes, "the practice that began exclusively as *la méthode bénédictine* has become what most of us regard as the only performance practice, a truly international style of singing that has largely defined the sound we associate with Gregorian chant." After all the words, this is the point; and the recordings that are currently available (the complete 1930 recordings remastered on Pearl GEMM CDS 9152; and two discs from 1980 and 1981 on Solesmes S. 822 and 823) show just how consistent and inspired that method was. Much may be learned from listening to these generations of monks—about expression through choral discipline, about authenticity, about Renaissance polyphony, about beauty. From their singing one comes away keenly aware that chant holds the key to understanding so much about Western music. To study Mozart or Wagner without knowing how they sing at Solesmes is like trying to learn a Romance language without any Latin.

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TRB *continued from page 6*

ous impression. It weaves the illusion that, if the scandal had been covered differently, it could have turned out differently. In this way, the commentators deplore their power as a means of exaggerating it. Thus, as often happens in American life, the kingdom of ought secedes from the dominion of is.

But we have got to resist such fantastical retrospecting. We have got to respect the primacy of events. The most powerful representations derive their power from what they are representing. The scandal deserved every degree of scrutiny it got, if not every kind of scrutiny it got. And it is stronger than its scrutiny. The occasion for Clinton-Starr-Lewinsky might have been crude farce, but it was the low development of an ongoing high historical drama.

For it involved a president indifferently elected by less than half the electorate and reelected almost by default; a president whose instinct to keep pleasing as a candidate rather than to start leading as a statesman was both politically keen and politically fatal. It revealed the cultural polarization that paradoxically supplies our harmonious political centrism. It gave that polarized layer of society an opportunity, for better or worse, to hold a stricter referendum on what politics had weakly decided (a startling lurch toward a multiparty system that no one has commented on). It showed that, beneath all the seeming consensus, American political life is still governed by Newtonian laws (absolute forces contending absolutely, the gravity of democracy bending the gravitas of statesmanship), while American ethical life is ruled by Einsteinian ones (our "compartmentalized" president and the compartmentalized response to his predicament). Thus the agony of our public language as it tries to straddle two parallel worlds.

And, in the end, Clinton-Starr-Lewinsky has balanced the excess of liberalism that plagues us with the excess of conservatism that plagues us. Clinton, who is the contemporary narcissist shedding his character as he wriggles through life, now must carry the burden imposed by our contemporary inquisitors, who will make him finish his term bearing the stain of impeachment like the taint of original sin. This much the scandal has taught us about the moment we live in.

We are all Clintonian now? Not really. I'm not. You're not. But, if the conceit appealed to you, consider it the product of events. We had better learn to be more accepting of the actuality of such events lest we become resigned to them. We had better stop worrying over "the people" as if over a vulnerable child whose self-esteem is radically altered by every public attempt to make sense of public experience.

For we (I mean humankind) have been here before, have we not? Power and temptation, and politics pushing and pulling trivia into consequence. Pericles and Aspasia, Marie Antoinette and her young Swede and her cardinal and the necklace, Parnell and his adultery—they all involved partisan politics and a trial. (And who can fathom desire's choices?) Let us stop being so surprised by everything. Those who have not learned the art of repeating history are condemned to forget it. As for me, I can barely wait for the next eruption of public stupidity, and for the tiny gems of clarification that fall from all the friction.

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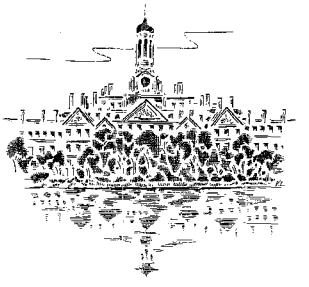
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Flags and fanatics

WHEN BILL CLINTON WENT TO Gaza last month, one of his aides observed dryly that the president wasn't in the business of providing flags to the Palestinians. The official meant, of course, that Clinton was not bestowing American blessings on the impending declaration of Palestinian statehood. In this, he was simply being politely dishonest—that is, diplomatic. Still, if the occasion did not exactly represent what the Balfour Declaration had achieved for the Jews in 1917, it certainly aimed at sheltering Yasir Arafat under Pax Americana, making the old terrorist an equal of Jordan's Hashemites and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. In any case, however, we *were* providing flags to the Palestinians—American flags that they would wave with the frenzy their culture tells them is the most convincing sign of authenticity. Actually, these flags were used twice, first to persuade the easily persuadable and oh-so-needy president that he was among friends and then again when they were burned, probably by some of the same people who had fluttered them in friendship only days earlier, to protest the U.S. attack against Iraq.

BILL CLINTON HAS NOT REVEALED how he interprets these contradictory demonstrations. But Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Martin Indyk, have a ready explanation and a ready remedy. The other Arabs don't support U.S. policy on Iraq, they argue, because the United States is allied with an Israel that is too hard on the Palestinians. Therefore, Israel must make ever more concessions to the Palestinians. It is a preposterous analysis, as if the Saudis care if Israel cedes one percent more of the contested land to Arafat, or ten percent, for that matter. As it happens, the rickety monarchy would not even allow the U.S. fighter planes that protect it to take off during our 70-hour war.

TO SURVIVE IN THE DESERT, YOU must be able to tell the difference between a mirage and the real thing. On this difference the Arabs are very savvy, and they know that the Clinton administration does not have serious intentions with reference to Iraq. They read his self-abnegating Ramadan limitation not as the specious expression of multiculturalist sensitivity it may also have been but simply and realistically as an advance declaration that the United States was not ready to fight Saddam to the finish. The Arabs also have long memories. What we call the Yom Kippur War they actually call the Ramadan war, which was started by Syria and Egypt during Ramadan. So why did Washington issue such a time-limiting pronouncement? Certainly to prevent any Americans from forming excessive expectations. And, if the secretary of state did suggest that we would like to be rid of Saddam (after all, she'd once called him Hitler), her colleague, Defense Secretary Bill Cohen, immediately insisted that this was precisely not our purpose. Moreover, the president did not contradict him, and so Albright was caught out again talking big but inconsequentially.



So we tailored our preordained time at war to a particularly fungible and squishy aim, "degrading" Iraq's military. How do you measure that? ("Degrade" is the *mot* of the moment. You will remember that the House Republicans "degraded" the standards for impeachment.) The SAM batteries that engaged our jets in northern Iraq were working just fine. And so, presumably, when Saddam Hussein finally does decide to use them again, will the chemical and biological weapons that we did not strike because, well ... they are chemical and biological weapons. And to bomb them could scatter them among innocent civilians. This is the predicament into which George Bush's refusal to take Saddam Hussein out, and Bill Clinton's subsequent refusal to do the same, has put us. The administration has borrowed a doctrine from the irrelevant past: deterrence. We will, they say, deter Saddam from using these weapons, although he has already used them against his neighbors and against his own hapless subjects. We are fooling ourselves. We won't deter him; we can't. All that we will do is punish him for a first strike. This is not deterrence but its failure.

I DO NOT THINK THAT BILL CLINton timed U.S. missile strikes on Iraq to his impeachment exigencies. (And, if I did, I wouldn't dare say so. After all, Representative Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island—nephew of Jack and Bobby, son of Ted—has issued his dictum: "It borders on treason....") But I do think that the president is limited by his impeachment exigencies. He feels that he doesn't have the moral authority to embark on a realistic bombing campaign, let alone put troops into the field. The president is certainly loath to do what must be done to drive Saddam Hussein from power, and as early as 1996 his administration scandalously betrayed unto death hundreds of Iraqi oppositionists who had enlisted in the CIA's struggle with Baghdad. To be sure, this may not be simply because he has felt himself politically fragile. From the beginning of his first term, when hauteur more aptly characterized his way in the world, the president's instincts were to indulge the dictator. And maybe that is how he still hopes to avoid the grim tidings. After the last missile landed in Iraq, U.N. relief workers were already helping repair such damage as our projectile weapons had succeeded in inflicting with the approval of Washington. Maybe the president wants to kill Saddam with kindness. In the meantime, Iraq threatens to retaliate against the United States by ending the "oil for food" program that feeds its people.

ONE THING IS FOR SURE: BILL CLINton can be fooled by a show whose rules are transparent to others. Go back to his appearance before the Palestine National Council. How many murderers were in the room, even murderers of Americans? For example, was Abu Abbas, a member in good standing of this assembly, present, he of the *Achille Lauro* triumph over an old man bound to a wheelchair? No one really knows, except possibly the Israelis, who, for their own reasons, aren't telling. This is certainly a question our president wouldn't ask. However dictatorial Arafat's rule and however supine this legislature, Clinton has a fetching bourgeois predilection for such institutions. A resolution is introduced, men and women raise their hands, the tally is (impressionistically) counted. In Clinton's view, probably, this ballot was a damn sight more democratic than the vote 120 hours later in the House of Representatives. So the chairman is giddy, the president is giddy. They bond with each other. In the end, however, the president has nothing but his memories, that sound-bite moment of bonding. Bill Clinton heads home to hyperacid America. And no sooner has he settled back into the White House than his new friends are burning his effigy and burning his flag.

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